

"The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US Air Force, Department of Defense or the US Government."

USAFA Harmon Memorial Lecture #3  
"Pacific Command: A Study in Interservice Relations"  
Professor Louis Morton, 1961

When two men ride the same horse, one must sit behind.  
-Anon.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to have this opportunity to visit the Air Force Academy and to speak to you under the auspices of the Harmon Memorial lecture Series, particularly since the Harmon name stirs memories of my own service during World War II. For almost two years I was on the staff- in a very junior capacity, I hasten to add- of Lt. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, Hubert Harmon's older brother and one of the leading figures in the early development of air power. As historian for the command, I had reason to learn that Millard Harmon had the same personal interest in military history that characterized the first superintendent of this Academy and is so fittingly memorialized in the present lecture series.

When Col. Kerig, of the History Department, invited me to give this lecture, I must confess that I accepted with some misgivings. To follow such distinguished historians as Frank Craven and T. Harry Williams, who gave the preceding lectures in this series, was a difficult enough assignment. But when I learned that my audience would number about 1,500, I was literally frightened. No academic audience, or any other I ever faced, numbered that many. The choice of topic was mine, but what could a historian talk about that would not only hold your interest for an hour but would also be of some value to you in the career for which you are now preparing?

Colonel Kerig made the choice easier. He suggested I talk about some aspect of World War II in the Pacific, a subject with which I had some familiarity, and I finally decided that you might profit most from a discussion of command. But I don't intend to talk about the art of command, about which Professor Williams spoke to you last April, but rather the problems involved in establishing and exercising command over the forces of more than one service. Such a command, which we call unified command, has always seemed to me one of the most difficult of military assignments, calling for the highest talents of diplomacy, management, and generalship. Yet, this kind of command, with all the demands it makes on the military man, is clearly the pattern of the future.

But as a historian, I would much rather talk about the past than the future, in the hope that we might find there some lessons of value. To understand fully the pattern of command in the Pacific, we must go back to the prewar period, when these commands were first established. By the time of Pearl Harbor, the United States already had four commands in the Pacific theater: U.S. Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) and the Asiatic Fleet in the Philippines; the Hawaiian Department and the Pacific Fleet in Hawaii. The first, USAFFE, had been formed in July 1941, with Gen. Douglas MacArthur in command, and included the Philippine Department, the Far East Air Force under Maj. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton, and the Philippine Army. Naval forces in the area were under Adm. Thomas C. Hart, commander of the Asiatic Fleet. In Hawaii, Army forces were under Maj. Gen. Walter C. Short, commander of the Hawaiian Department; naval forces, under the Pacific Fleet commander, Adm. Husband E. Kimmel. In both places, Hawaii and the Philippines, the Army and Navy commanders were independent of each other and joint operations were conducted under the principle of cooperation in accordance with prewar doctrine.

The inadequacies of command by mutual cooperation and the danger of divided responsibility had been recognized before the war. But all efforts to establish unity of command in those areas where the Army and Navy were jointly responsible for defense had foundered on the sharp crags of service jealousies and rivalries.

The disaster at Pearl Harbor provided the pressure needed to overcome these differences. Determined that there should be no repetition of the confusion of responsibility that had existed in Hawaii, President Roosevelt ordered his military and naval advisers to establish unified commands where they were needed. Thus, on December 12th, a unified command under the Army was established in Panama, where it was thought the Japanese might strike next, and five days later, a similar command was set up in Hawaii, under Navy control.

The establishment of unity of command in Hawaii coincided with a complete turnover in the high command there. Rear Adm. Chester W. Nimitz was jumped two grades and appointed in Kimmel's place; Lt. Gen. Delos C. Emmons, an air officer, replaced Short; and Brig. Gen. Clarence L. Tinker took over command of the air forces.

In the Philippines, unity of command was not established until the end of January, after the Asiatic Fleet and the Far East Air Force had left. What MacArthur needed, once the Japanese had landed, was not control of a non-existent navy and air force but reinforcements, and it was this need that led to the creation of the first U.S. overseas wartime command of World War II. The architect was Brig. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who proposed to Gen. George C. Marshall on December 17th that the troops in a convoy of seven ships due to arrive in Brisbane, Australia, on the 22nd be made the nucleus of a new command. Designated U.S. Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA), this command, Eisenhower suggested should be headed by an air officer from the Philippines and be responsible to MacArthur, since its primary mission would be support of the Philippines. General Marshall quickly approved Eisenhower's plan, and orders went out immediately setting up the new U.S. command. Thus was established the base in Australia that later became the nucleus of MacArthur's wartime headquarters.

The first Allied command of the war, like the first American command, also came in the Pacific. Designated ABDA for the initials of the national forces involved (American, British, Dutch, and Australian), the new command included Burma, the Malay Barrier, the Netherlands Indies, northwest Australia, and the Philippines. Its commander was a British officer, Gen. Archibald P. Wavell, and the staff was drawn from all the nations concerned, since the American and British Chiefs of Staff were anxious to guard against the preponderance of one nationality in the new headquarters. Thus, Wavell had an American deputy and a British, Dutch, and an American officer to head the air, ground, and naval commands, respectively.

Almost from the start, national differences created problems. To the American, Dutch, and Australian officers, it seemed that General Wavell was devoting far too much attention, as well as a disproportionate share of Allied resources, to the defense of Malaya, Singapore, and Burma, an attitude that seemed to them to reflect British rather than Allied interests. The American commanders, Admiral Hart and General Brereton, free from any territorial interest in the area, wished to protect the lines of communications. The Dutch desired above all else to concentrate Allied resources on the defense of their territories. And the Australians, concerned over the defense of their homeland, continually pressed for a greater share of the theater's resources on the east and resisted requests for troops and planes they thought could be better used at home.

To all of these difficulties of ABDA was added still another-the impossible task of holding Burma and the Malay Barrier. When it became clear that there was no chance of stopping the Japanese, Wavell recommended that ABDACOM be dissolved. The British favored the move, but the Americans, anxious to avoid the appearance of abandoning their Dutch allies, objected. The compromise finally adopted was to allow Wavell to dissolve his headquarters but to retain the ABDA command with the Dutch in control. Arrangements were quickly completed, and on February 25th

General Wavell turned over his command and left for India. With the fall of Java on March 9th, the ill-fated ABDA command came to an end.

MacArthur's departure from the Philippines early in March provides an instructive example for students of command. Unwilling to give up control of the Philippines, he arranged to exercise command of the forces there from his new headquarters in Australia, 4,000 miles away, through an advance echelon on Corregidor headed by a deputy chief of staff.

Careful as he had been in making these arrangements, MacArthur neglected one thing—to inform Washington. The result was utter confusion. The War Department assumed that Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright, senior officer in the Islands and commander on Bataan, was in command of all forces in the Philippines and addressed him as such. But the messages came to MacArthur's deputy on Corregidor, who sent them on to MacArthur, then en route to Australia. Finally, the President and the Chief of Staff sent separate messages to Wainwright telling him of his promotion to lieutenant general. "Upon the departure of General MacArthur," wrote Marshall, "you become commander of U.S. forces in the Philippines." No confusion was possible, and on March 20th Wainwright formally assumed command of U.S. Forces in the Philippines (USFIP), the name of his new headquarters.

MacArthur made no objections. He accepted the President's decision gracefully and there the matter rested. Thus, by the end of March there were five major American commands in the Pacific: USAFFE, MacArthur's pre-war command; USAFIA, the command in Australia; USFIP, Wainwright's command in the Philippines; the Hawaiian Department; and the Pacific Fleet, encompassing all naval elements in the area and exercising unified command in Hawaii.

\* \* \* \* \*

The command arrangements thus far made for the Pacific had been emergency measures. Clearly something more permanent was needed if the Allies expected eventually to take the offensive against Japan. The task of fashioning such an organization fell to the United States, which, by common consent of the Allies, assumed primary responsibility for the Pacific theater. By mid-March both the Army and Navy had worked out plans for such an organization. Oddly enough, neither gave serious attention to the appointment of a single commander for the entire area, despite the fact that such an arrangement had so many obvious advantages and was so close to the President and General Marshall's belief in the importance of unified command. The reason was evident: there was no available candidate who would be acceptable to everyone concerned. The outstanding officer in the Pacific was General MacArthur, but he did not have the confidence of the Navy. Certainly the Navy would never have entrusted the fleet to MacArthur, or to any other Army officer. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the chief naval candidate for the post, had not yet acquired the popularity and prestige he later enjoyed, and he was, moreover, considerably junior to MacArthur. There was no escape from this impasse except the creation of two commands.

Just how should the Pacific be divided? The Navy's idea was to place Australia, the Indies, and New Guinea under an Army commander and the remainder of the Pacific under the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet; the Army's, to place everything south and west of the line Philippines-Samoa under MacArthur and the area north and east of the line under Nimitz. The Joint Chiefs finally resolved the difference by creating a Southwest Pacific Area and a Pacific Ocean Area along the lines generally favored by the Navy. The necessary directives were thereupon drawn up and approved by the President on March 30, 1942.

The appointment of commanders followed. As expected, General MacArthur was made Commander in Chief of the Southwest Pacific Area; Admiral Nimitz, of the Pacific Ocean Areas. MacArthur's domain included Australia, the Philippines, New Guinea, the Solomons, the Bismarck Archipelago, and all of the Netherlands Indies except Sumatra. Admiral Nimitz's command encompassed virtually the remainder of the Pacific and was divided into three subordinate areas. Two

of these, the Central and North Pacific, were under Nimitz's direct control, and the third, the South Pacific, under a naval officer responsible to Nimitz. The dividing line between the first two was at 420 North, thus placing Hawaii, the Gilberts and Marshalls, the Mandated Islands, and Japan itself in the Central Pacific. The South Pacific Area, which extended southward from the equator, between the Southwest Pacific and 1100 West Longitude, included the all-important line of communications to Australia.

Though superficially alike, the directives to the Pacific commanders differed in some fundamental respects. As supreme commander in an area that presumably would include large forces of other governments, MacArthur, like Wavell, was specifically enjoined from directly commanding any national force or interfering with its internal administration. Nimitz was not thus restricted, for it was anticipated that his forces would be mostly American and his operations more closely related to the fleet. Also, MacArthur's mission was mainly defensive and included only the injunction to "prepare" for an offensive. Combined with the statement that he was to hold Australia as a base for future offensives, it was possible to derive from it, as MacArthur quickly did, authorization for offensive operations.

Admiral Nimitz's directive assigned a defensive mission too, but it clearly envisaged offensive operations for the future by instructing him to "prepare for the execution of major amphibious offensives against positions held by Japan, the initial offensives to be launched from the South Pacific Area and Southwest Pacific Area." This wording implied that Admiral Nimitz would command not only the offensive in his own area but that in MacArthur's area as well. And this may well have been the intent of the naval planners who drafted the directives, for in their view all amphibious operations- and any operation in the Pacific would be amphibious-should be under naval command.

MacArthur's organization followed traditional Army lines. In addition to Wainwright's command in the Philippines, soon to become inactive, he had three operational commands: Allied Land Forces under the Australian Gen. Sir Thomas Blamey and Allied Air and Allied Naval Forces under American officers. All American units, with the exception of certain air elements, were assigned to USAFIA, the administrative and service agency for U.S. Army forces, which was soon redesignated U.S. Services of Supply.

MacArthur staffed his headquarters with men of his own choice. There was nothing in his directive requiring him to appoint officers of the participating governments, as General Wavell had been required to do. Both the President and General Marshall urged him to do so, but MacArthur ignored these suggestions and named American officers to virtually every important post in his headquarters.

Admiral Nimitz exercised considerably more direct control over his forces than did General MacArthur. In addition to his command of the Pacific Fleet, he also commanded directly two of the three areas established. Like MacArthur, he was prohibited from interfering in the internal administration of the forces in his theater, but as a fleet commander he remained responsible for naval administration as well as operations. He was thus answerable to himself in several capacities, and it was not always clear whether he was acting as area commander, fleet commander, or theater commander responsible to the Joint Chiefs in Washington. This fact and the failure to define precisely the relationship between Admiral Nimitz and Gen. Emmons, the Army Commander in Hawaii, created much difficulty.

Of the three subordinate areas of Admiral Nimitz's command, the South Pacific presented the most immediate problem, for it was there that the first Allied offensive came. The organization established by Vice Adm. Robert L. Ghormley, the officer selected to command the South Pacific, closely paralleled that of Admiral Nimitz. Retaining for himself control of all naval units in the area and of their administration as well, Ghormley exercised command through a staff that was essentially naval in character. Of 103 officers assigned in September 1942 only three wore the Army uniform. Thus his headquarters became the center for naval administration as well as joint operations and planning. In

addition, all the major commands in the theater were under Navy officers and had predominantly Navy staffs.

The need for an Army command in the South Pacific could hardly be denied. Army troops in New Zealand, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, the Fijis, and elsewhere had been rushed out so quickly that there had been no opportunity to perfect arrangements for their support and control. Supply of these forces was cumbersome and inefficient, and responsibility divided. Thus a base commander might report directly to the War Department, get his supplies from the San Francisco port or Australia, and take his orders for airfield construction, possibly his most important task, from General Emmons in Hawaii.

Allocation of B-17's to the South Pacific Area constituted another major problem. The assignment of the Army Air Forces' most precious weapon, the B-17, to the South Pacific brought into sharp focus the question of control of aircraft. Ghormley's command, despite its theoretically joint character, was naval, and the air commander was an admiral. Army aircraft thus came under Navy control for operations. This could not be avoided under the principle of unity of command, distasteful as it may have been to the airmen. But when it became apparent that the Navy would also be responsible for training, the Army expressed strong objections. Air forces, it held, should retain their identity, be assigned appropriate missions, and execute them under their own commanders in accordance with Army Air Force doctrine.

The solution arrived at in Washington late in July to meet this problem, as well as the problem of supply and administration, was to establish under Ghormley a new command, U.S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area (USAFISPA), and to assign as its commander Maj. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, Chief of the Air Staff. General Harmon, in turn, chose for his staff highly trained airmen-Nathan F. Twining as Chief of Staff, Frank E. Everest, Dean C. Strother, and others-a clear indication that the new headquarters intended to uphold the interests of the Army Air Forces in this predominantly naval area.

In the North Pacific, Admiral Nimitz exercised his responsibility through Rear Adm. Robert A. Theobald. But the situation was complicated by the fact that the bulk of the forces in the region were Army troops assigned to the Alaskan Defense Command, under Maj. Gen. Simon B. Buckner, Jr., which, in turn, was a part of Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt's Western Defense Command in the United States. The Eleventh Air Force was headed by Brig. Gen. William O. Butler, who was under Admiral Theobald for operations. Unified command, difficult enough to attain under ideal conditions, proved impossible in the North Pacific, for the commanders there showed no disposition to subordinate their individual convictions for the common good. By August 1942, feelings in the theater had risen so high that Maj. Gen. Thomas T. Handy, the chief Army planner, recommended that the War and Navy Departments inform the senior officers in the theater that there could be no excuse "for withholding wholehearted support of the Service or the Commander exercising unity of command. Strong notice of this conviction . . ." he believed, "would do much to force essential cooperation and reduce much fruitless controversy between the two services."

When the situation did not improve, the Army proposed a separate Alaskan Department independent of General DeWitt and headed by an air officer. This arrangement would also make it possible to shift the three top commanders in Alaska-Theobald, Buckner, and Butler-to other assignments quietly and without any unpleasantness. Eventually, Marshall and King decided against a change, and the situation so improved that Admiral King was able to write later that command in the North Pacific had worked out very well "largely due to the excellent cooperation between the responsible commanders concerned. I have not seen fit to press for a change in this set-up," he continued, "nor do I wish to do so now. In fact, it is working so well that I believe a change would be a mistake."

\* \* \* \* \*

The Guadalcanal campaign provided the first real test of unified command in the Pacific. From the first, Harmon felt that not enough emphasis was being given to air power. In his report to Marshall on the Guadalcanal landing, he called attention to the fact that no air construction units had been included in the invasion force and that even when Henderson Field was completed it would be impossible to base bombers there until fighter and antiaircraft protection was provided. Only if the Navy could send construction personnel and equipment up to Guadalcanal, together with Marine fighter and scout bombers, Harmon told Marshall, would he be able to send in his own bombers.

The Navy's failure to appreciate the importance of airfield construction was a reflection of the Navy's concept of air power as a supporting arm for naval and Army ground forces. In Harmon's view, and Gen. Henry H. Arnold's, air power was the dominant element in the war, surface and ground forces the supporting elements. Until this was recognized, he declared, the campaign would go slowly.

Harmon also deplored the defensive spirit that, he felt, dominated the Navy's operations. He appreciated the necessity for "reasonable caution" but pointed out at the same time that most of the Navy's surface losses had come when it was operating in a defensive role. Vigorous offensive action, he insisted, was the best defense, regardless of the strategic role assigned the Pacific in global strategy.

General Arnold, to whom these comments were directed, soon had the opportunity to judge for himself the truth of Harmon's assertions. His voyage to the Pacific later in September took him to Noumea, where he conferred with Ghormley and Nimitz, as well as with Harmon. His conclusions, presented to General Marshall on his return to Washington, were: first, "that the Navy had not demonstrated its ability to properly conduct air operations," and, second, that the Navy's failure to appreciate the importance of logistics had led to a shortage of the supplies required to support military operations.

Adm. William F. Halsey's assumption of command in mid-October and the offensive spirit that marked operations thereafter brought warm approval from Harmon. The two men worked well together and Halsey's insistence on the "one force" principle did much to eliminate misunderstanding, as did his willingness to give the Army more responsibility and a greater share in the conduct of operations. "Where disposition of Army forces is involved," Harmon told General Marshall, "the Commander South Pacific makes his decision only after conference with me."

Cooperation, or lack of it, between the South and Southwest Pacific also placed a heavy strain on command relations during the Guadalcanal campaign. General Marshall's frequent reference to the subject is a measure of the importance he attached to it. He had raised the matter very early in the campaign, and had received from MacArthur, Ghormley, and Harmon denials of any differences. Still, the rumors of a lack of cooperation persisted, and General Marshall more than once had to assure the President that MacArthur was doing all he could to support operations on Guadalcanal. Undoubtedly he was, but Marshall did not feel that lateral liaison was a satisfactory substitute for unified command.

One of the major obstacles to a unified command, General Marshall recognized early, was the service point of view, the inevitable result of a lifetime spent in learning the business of being a soldier or a sailor or an airman. Since there was no way of eliminating this obstacle short of an extended period of training, Marshall sought to diminish its effect by placing Army officers on the staff of naval commanders and sponsoring the appointment of naval officers to staffs headed by Army commanders. This exchange, he felt, would result in a better understanding by each of the services of the others' problems and practices and alert the commanders to potential areas of disagreement. Thus, when the South Pacific Area was established, Marshall had two Army officers assigned to Admiral Ghormley's staff. But Harmon reassigned both officers when he arrived in the area, on the ground that they were not needed, since he and his staff consulted frequently with their naval colleagues.

General Marshall did not agree. In his view, liaison between commanders was not nearly so effective as a joint staff. "Higher commanders talk things over in generalities," he pointed out. "Staff officers plan in intimacy over long periods."

The ideal solution to command in the Pacific would be to place the entire theater under one head. Everyone was agreed on this, but no one quite knew how to overcome the formidable obstacles in the way of such an arrangement. Finally, in October 1942, after a visit to the theater, General Arnold took the initiative and proposed to Marshall that an Army officer be made supreme commander in the Pacific. That there would be power opposition to such a move, he readily conceded. As a matter of fact, he thought a "presidential decree" would be required to bring about the change. And for General Marshall's information, he nominated three officers for the post: General MacArthur, Lt. Gen. Joseph T. McNarney, Marshall's deputy, and Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, commander of the Army Ground Forces, all of whom he thought "perfectly capable of conducting the combined operations . . . in this area."

What General Marshall thought of Arnold's suggestion we do not know. All he did was pass it on to his staff without comment, at least none that is recorded. There it was studied by Brig. Gen. St. Clair Streett, an air officer, and Brig. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer. Streett approved of the whole idea and thought that Marshall would support it, "regardless of the difficulties." The real problem would come in selecting a commander, and that, Streett felt, would have to be done by the President himself. Wedemeyer also supported the idea of a single commander and thought command should go to the Air Forces, since that service, he believed, would exercise the strongest influence in the Pacific. His first choice for the job was General Arnold himself; his second choice, McNarney.

General Streett's final thoughts on this subject are worth noting: "At the risk of being considered naive and just plain country-boy dumb," he said that the major obstacle to a "sane military solution" of the problem was General MacArthur himself. Only with MacArthur out of the picture would it be possible to establish a sound organization in the area. Streett appreciated fully the political implications of removing MacArthur but thought it could be done safely if the general were given some high post such as the ambassadorship to Russia, "a big enough job for anyone." Then, depending on whether the Navy or the Air Forces were considered to have the dominant role in the war, the post of supreme commander in the Pacific could be given either to Admiral Nimitz or General McNarney. The South and Southwest Pacific, Streett thought, should be combined, but the organization of the remainder of the theater could be left to the supreme commander who would "draw his own lines, designate subordinates, and select his own command post."

Nothing came of all this discussion of a supreme command. Apparently, Marshall did not wish to precipitate a fight over command and did not, as far as we know, raise the problem with the Navy or with the President.

\* \* \* \* \*

The struggle over command did not end with the Guadalcanal campaign, and was renewed each time the Army and Navy began to plan future operations. Thus, when General Marshall proposed to Admiral King toward the close of the Guadalcanal campaign that the theater commanders be directed to submit plans for succeeding operations against Rabaul, he precipitated anew the debate over command in the Pacific. The point at issue was not the objective or the timing of operations but command. Marshall proposed that the command be divided, as originally agreed, with MacArthur getting strategic direction of the entire campaign and Halsey operational control along the Solomons axis.

The Navy did not agree. Nimitz thought the entire offensive should be directed by Halsey and that "any change of command of those forces which Halsey has welded into a working organization would be most unwise." The naval planners in Washington pointed out further that command was inseparable from control of the Pacific Fleet. Clearly, the Navy had no intention of entrusting the Fleet to an Army commander, but it was apparently willing to give MacArthur strategic direction of the campaign

against Rabaul if Nimitz were appointed supreme commander. As MacArthur's superior, then, Nimitz would become guardian of the Navy's interests in the Pacific.

This proposal was clearly an offer to trade, a *quid pro quo* arrangement by which the naval planners offered the Army command over operations against Rabaul in return for control of the Pacific. But the Army refused to trade. "The Fleet," General Handy observed tartly, "would be as helpless without air and land forces as the latter would be without the Fleet."

When this move failed, Admiral King tried a new tack. The command established for Guadalcanal, he proposed, should be continued until Rabaul was reached. Then MacArthur could be given strategic direction of the operations against Rabaul, provided, first, Nimitz's control was extended to include the waters of the Southwest Pacific and, second, the naval forces involved remained under Nimitz's "general command."

The strategy of this move was transparent, and Marshall rejected it out of hand. The Guadalcanal campaign had demonstrated only too clearly the shortcomings of the existing arrangement. To continue them, as King wanted to do, would be folly indeed.

It was now early January and the Joint Chiefs suspended the debate over command to meet with the British at Casablanca. Two months later, when discussion was resumed, it was evident that neither side had changed its position. The Army still insisted that strategic direction of the campaign against Rabaul should go to MacArthur; the Navy, that Halsey should remain in control of operations in the Solomons under Nimitz. The real issue was not operations in the Solomons but command of the Pacific. Behind the Navy's insistence was the feeling that since the Army had the European command, it should have the Pacific. Bitterly, Rear Adm. Charles M. Cooke, Jr., the chief naval planner, wrote his Army counterpart:

When commands were set up in England for operations in France and for the invasion of North Africa . . . the Navy recognized that this was an Army matter and accorded unified command to the Army upon its own initiative. . . . The Pacific . . . is and will continue to be a naval problem as a whole. If, to meet this problem we are to have unified command it is, in my opinion, up to the War Department to take steps necessary to set it up as a unified Naval command.

During the debate that followed, neither side would budge. There was no compromise; clearly one side would have to give way. Suddenly, without any advance notice, the Navy abandoned its case and accepted the Army plan almost without change. For four months, Admiral King and the naval staff had opposed the Army strongly and bitterly. In the end, they accepted MacArthur almost without question. The key to this strange about-face lies, perhaps, in Admiral King's unwillingness, in the face of Marshall's strong stand, to push matters so far as to prejudice his relationship with the Army Chief of Staff.

While the forces of the South and Southwest Pacific were making ready for the campaign ahead against Rabaul, to begin in June 1943, plans were being made to initiate the long-deferred offensive in the Central Pacific. By the middle of July 1943, these were virtually complete, and on the 20th of the month Admiral Nimitz received a directive from the Joint Chiefs to seize the Gilbert Islands in November and make plans for the later invasion of the Marshalls.

No sooner had the Army and Navy staffs in Hawaii begun to plan for these operations than they ran into some of the same problems that had beset the South Pacific staff. The most important fact about command in the area was Admiral Nimitz's own position. His role as commander of the Pacific Ocean Areas was clear, but his additional positions as Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, and Commander of the Central Pacific Area created some confusion. Moreover, he used virtually the same staff while acting in all three capacities, and Army officers justifiably felt that their point of view could not be adequately represented on a staff consisting almost entirely of naval officers and functioning largely as a fleet staff. What ought to be done, the Army thought, was to give Nimitz an adequate joint staff and



divorce him from his area and fleet commands so that he could function, like MacArthur, as a theater commander. The Navy stoutly denied the need for a change, and asserted that existing arrangements had worked well for the past eighteen months, and had "utilized our talents to the best advantage."

That the Navy would enter into discussions with the Army on so important a post in the naval hierarchy as the Pacific Fleet command, or assign to that command any but its senior representative in the theater, seemed most doubtful. To make the Pacific Fleet "a unit under a Theater Commander" would, in effect, remove it from the direct control of Admiral King in his capacity as Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet. Rather than limit Nimitz's operational control as Fleet Commander, the Navy Department, the Army planners believed, would seek to extend his-and thereby King's-authority to include the surface elements in MacArthur's area on the ground that it was essential for the "maximum mobility" of the Fleet.

Admiral Nimitz himself saw little advantage in a separation of his functions or a change in his staff. Moreover, when he organized his forces for the forthcoming offensive, he adopted the usual naval task force pattern. To plan and direct operations, he established the Central Pacific Force, with Vice Adm. Raymond A. Spruance in command. Under it were three major commands: the Fifth Amphibious Force, the Fast Carrier Force, and Land- Based Air Forces, all headed by flag officers.

At the same time that Nimitz was making these arrangements, the new Army commander in the area, Lt. Gen. Robert C. Richardson, was reorganizing his own forces. In recognition of the importance of shipping in an oceanic theater, he abolished the old Service Forces and created instead an Army Port and Service Command. All the combat divisions in the area he placed under separate command and organized a Task Force headquarters in anticipation of future needs. In addition, he recommended to General Marshall that he be designated commander of all Army ground and air elements in the area "so that Army troops used in the forthcoming operations will have a commander toward whom they can look for supply, administration, and assistance."

In Washington, Admiral King, no doubt prompted by Nimitz, supported Richardson's request on the ground that his appointment as commander of Army forces in the Central Pacific Area would create an organization similar to that in the South Pacific. Under such an arrangement, he pointed out, General Richardson's position vis-a-vis Nimitz would parallel the relationship between Harmon and Halsey. The Army was more than willing to comply, and action was quickly taken to create a new headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Central Pacific Area, with Richardson as commander.

The geographical extent of General Richardson's authority under this directive corresponded to the area delineated as the Central Pacific in Nimitz's original directive. Within this vast region, only a small portion of which was yet in American hands, Richardson was responsible for the administration, supply, and training of all U.S. Army troops, whether ground or air. Like Harmon, he had no responsibility for operations other than to assist "in the preparation and execution of plans" involving Army forces in the area, subject always to the direction of Admiral Nimitz.

Differences of opinion over the division of responsibility between the Army and Navy soon arose. All land-based aircraft, including the Army's, had been placed under Adm. John H. Hoover, a naval air officer. General Richardson objected to this arrangement. Maj. Gen. Willis H. Hale, the Seventh Air Force Commander, he said, should be given this command, subject to Hoover's control. Nimitz refused but agreed to assign Hale to Hoover's staff, if the Army wished. This was not at all what Richardson wanted. What he was trying to establish was an Army headquarters in close juxtaposition to Hoover's, not representation on the staff. General Hale, he insisted, should command directly the Army air units in the invasion of the Gilberts. Only in this way would it be possible to insure the proper and effective employment of Army aircraft in accordance with Army Air Force doctrine. This argument, similar to the one General Harmon had successfully impressed on Halsey during the Guadalcanal campaign, apparently convinced Admiral Nimitz, and he finally agreed to appoint Hale commander, under Hoover, of a task group composed of Army air units.

Control of Army ground troops scheduled to participate in the Gilberts operation also caused difficulty. The V Amphibious Corps, headed by the Marine Gen. Holland M. Smith, had responsibility for amphibious training of all troops. In addition, Smith commanded the ground forces for the Gilberts operation. This dual command raised all kinds of questions about responsibility and relationships, and Richardson, seeking clarification, asked Nimitz who controlled the training of Army troops-the Army or Holland Smith?

Nimitz's answer, though lengthy, was clear. Holland Smith did. Richardson then turned to Marshall for help, but received none. Troops earmarked for specific operations, Marshall told him, would pass from his command at Nimitz's discretion, presumably but not necessarily after consultation with him.

If Richardson received no support from Marshall at this juncture, it was not because the Chief of Staff was unsympathetic but because he was determined to make the command in Hawaii, with all its imperfections, work. Thus, though he told Richardson, in effect, that he would have to get along with Nimitz, he continued to push for a joint staff that would give the Army a larger voice in the affairs of the Central Pacific. This matter, he told King, was an "absolute requirement" and an "urgent necessity," in view of the operations soon to begin in the Gilbert Islands.

Perseverance finally had its reward. On September 6th, after nearly four months of discussion, Admiral Nimitz announced the formation of a joint staff, to be headed by his deputy commander, a vice admiral, and to consist of officers from both services. Of the four sections of this staff-Plans, Operations, intelligence, and Logistics-two were to be under Army officers. "it would seem," King exulted, "that we are in a fair way to setting up an adequate staff organization out there."

The Army planners were not optimistic. Gen. Brehon B. Somervell did not think such a staff would solve the "still nebulous" command problems in the Pacific nor make any clearer the "rather tenuous and ill-defined" relationships between the various commanders and staffs. General Handy agreed with this judgment and noted further that Nimitz had made no provision for representation from the administrative and supply services- medical, signal, ordnance, and engineer. Moreover, he said, Nimitz should have named two deputies, one a flag officer, the other an Army general. Each could then coordinate routine matters pertaining to his own service.

General Marshall was somewhat more generous. The establishment of a joint staff, he told King, was definitely a step in the right direction, but he thought there was room for improvement. His goal was still a reorganization of the Pacific Ocean Areas that would divorce Nimitz from his area and fleet commands, leaving him free to assume the proper functions of a theater commander. But he recognized that there was little chance of securing such a change. The Navy had conceded as much as it intended to in the Pacific.

\* \* \* \* \*

The command arrangements worked out so painfully during the spring and summer of 1943 remained unchanged for almost a year while Allied forces in the Pacific fought their way up the Solomons and New Guinea and westward from Hawaii to the Gilberts and Marshalls. By March of 1944, with Rabaul and Truk largely neutralized, plans were being made to accelerate the pace of the war against Japan. Again the question of organization arose, for the forces of the South Pacific had fought their way out of a job. There were no further objectives in the area and no plans for further operations there. What had once been the most active theater in the Pacific was rapidly becoming a communications zone. The task facing the Joint Chiefs, therefore, was how best to utilize the combat forces of the South Pacific, to find appropriate assignments for their veteran commanders, and to organize what was left for support rather than combat missions.

The first move toward a resolution of these problems came in mid- March when the Joint Chiefs, after months of deliberation, agreed to divide the combat forces of the South Pacific between

MacArthur and Nimitz. The lion's share would go to MacArthur—a corps, six divisions, service troops, and the Thirteenth Air Force, now commanded by Maj. Gen. Hubert R. Harmon. Nimitz was to get the remainder, the Third Fleet, marine units, garrison forces, and other elements required to defend and maintain the South Pacific bases.

The reorganization of the area proved somewhat more difficult to achieve than anticipated, and it was complicated by the fact that the Twentieth Air Force, scheduled soon to move into the Pacific, was under General Arnold's personal command. The solution finally adopted affected only Army forces and did not alter Admiral Nimitz's position or his relationship to MacArthur. The South Pacific remained under his control as before, but Army forces were placed under a new headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas (USAFPOA), effective August 1st. This new command, headed by General Richardson, would control not only Army forces of the South Pacific, now to be redesignated the South Pacific Base Command, but also those of the Central Pacific. In addition, a command consisting of Army air units in both areas and designated Army Air Force, Pacific Ocean Areas (AAFPOA), was created. General Millard Harmon would head this command and also serve as Deputy Commander, Twentieth Air Force. The assignment was a particularly difficult one, for Harmon had to serve three masters: General Arnold for matters involving the Twentieth; Admiral Nimitz for plans, operations, and training of Army air forces; and General Richardson for their administration and supply. That he was able, despite numerous differences, to work in harmony with all three is a mark of his qualities as a joint commander. His loss on a flight over Kwajalein in February 1945 deprived the Army Air Force of one of its ablest and most experienced officers.

As a result of these changes, there was a wholesale shift of units and commanders in the Pacific during the summer of 1944. On June 15th, General MacArthur took over from Halsey responsibility for operations along the Solomons-New Ireland axis and with it all the troops in that area. That same day Admiral Halsey left the South Pacific, followed two days later by General Harmon. In the weeks that followed, Army units continued to move to new locations in the Southwest Pacific. By August 1, 1944, when the new organization went into effect, the picture in the Pacific was quite different from what it had been six months earlier. There were still two major areas. But now MacArthur's responsibility included the Upper Solomons-New Ireland area, and his forces had been considerably increased. Nimitz, too, had gained additional resources—more Marine divisions, another fleet, and the promise of B-29s, once the Marianas were taken. Control of Army forces in the area was centralized under Richardson and Harmon, with local responsibility vested in the newly established South Pacific and Central Pacific Base Commands.

\* \* \* \* \*

The new organization had been in effect only a few months when it became evident that something would have to be done about the original division of the Pacific made in March 1942. Plans were already being formulated for the invasion of Japan, and the somewhat artificial area boundaries established two years earlier were clearly becoming obsolete. What would happen after MacArthur recaptured the Philippines? Under the original directive, MacArthur's area extended only as far north as these islands. Once they were taken, he would have no further combat mission. What would be done then? To place MacArthur under Nimitz was out of the question; to rule him out of the war on a technicality was obviously absurd. It was equally absurd in the Army's view to entrust the forty or fifty divisions and the thousands of planes required for the invasion of Japan to the overall control of an admiral. Moreover, the division of forces between two independent and separate commands, no matter how equitable the distribution, imposed a degree of rigidity and inefficiency in the use of these forces that was excusable perhaps in the early days of the war, but inadmissible for operations on the scale required for the defeat of Japan.

The most logical solution, of course, was to name a single commander for the entire Pacific with separate air, ground, and naval commands. The service interests and personality problems that had ruled out such an arrangement in the spring of 1942, however, were even stronger in the fall of 1944. No one, therefore, seriously pressed for a supreme commander at this time, though General Arnold did propose a single air command for the entire theater. The Navy generally stood firm on the area organization and sought initially to maintain the existing boundary, an arrangement which would have given Nimitz command of the final operations against Japan. Naval leaders soon abandoned this position in the face of Army opposition and proposed instead the creation of an additional area for Japan under the Joint Chiefs. Who would command this area was not made explicit, but presumably it would be an Army officer.

General MacArthur's position on reorganization of the Pacific for the final offensive against Japan was that existing commands should be retained, largely because of their allied character; but that all U.S. forces in the theater should be placed under separate Army and Navy commands reporting directly to the Joint Chiefs. What MacArthur was proposing, in effect, was abolition of the unified commands created in 1942 and a return to the principle of mutual cooperation. But he recognized that unity of command would be required for active operations. When it was, it could be achieved easily, he thought, by the formation of joint task forces. Such an arrangement, he told Marshall, "will give true unity of command in the Pacific, as it permits the employment of all available resources against the selected objective."

In Washington, General Marshall and his planners supported MacArthur's views, as King did Nimitz's. The outcome, which was closely linked to the strategy for defeating Japan, represented in general a victory for the Army position. Thus, on April 3rd, General MacArthur was named Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces in the Pacific (AFPAC), in addition to his command of the Southwest Pacific Area, thereby acquiring administrative control of all Army resources in the Pacific, with the exception of the Twentieth Air Force. At the same time, Nimitz, while retaining his Pacific Fleet and area commands, gained control of all U.S. naval forces in the Pacific. Under the direction of the Joint Chiefs, MacArthur would normally be responsible for land operations, Nimitz for sea operations. Each would have under his control the entire resources of his own service and the authority to establish joint task forces or to appoint subordinate commanders to conduct operations for which he was responsible.

The Twentieth Air Force constituted in effect a third separate command for the Pacific, though it did not have the status of the Army and Navy commands. General Arnold continued to argue for equal representation for his Air Forces and having failed in this, proposed a U.S. Army Strategic Air Force for the Pacific, to include the Twentieth and Eighth Air Forces under Gen. Carl Spaatz. Despite the objections of MacArthur, this proposal was approved on July 10th, a month before the Japanese surrender; and on the 16th Spaatz assumed command.

Meanwhile, both Nimitz and MacArthur had proceeded to reorganize their forces to conform to the new organization. There was not much for Nimitz to do, since he gained little if any authority and few units as a result of this latest move. MacArthur, however, had won much, and his first step was to establish his new headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific, and to assume command. With his new title went administrative and operational control over all Army forces in the Pacific, excepting always the Twentieth Air Force. Keeping operational control in his own hands, MacArthur delegated administrative responsibility to two new headquarters: Army Forces, Western Pacific, and Army Forces, Middle Pacific. In addition, he retained command of the Southwest Pacific Area, through which he continued to exercise operational control over Australian and Dutch forces. His Army air elements, comprising ultimately all of the Army Air Forces in the Pacific except those in Spaatz's command were under Gen. George C. Kenney's Far East Air Force.

Thus, when the war with Japan came to an end, the forces in the Pacific were organized into three commands, with the strategic bombardment force in a position of near equality with the Army and

Navy forces. All efforts to establish a single commander for the theater had failed, and even the unified commands set up in 1942 had been abandoned under the pressure of events. Only on the battlefield had unity of command prevailed. There were many differences between the Army and Navy, but on one thing both were agreed. The main job was to meet the enemy and defeat him with the least possible loss of life. In Washington, in Hawaii, and in Australia, Army and Navy officers, with different outlooks and points of view developed over a lifetime of training and experience, weighed the issues of war in terms of service interest and prestige. But on Guadalcanal, on Tarawa, and at Leyte, there was no debate. Where the issues were life and death, all wore the same uniform. Perhaps that is the supreme lesson of the Pacific war-that true unity of command can be only on the field of battle.

1. This paper is based largely on the author's volume *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* in the official series *United States Army in World War II*, to be published by the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Permission to use the manuscript of *Strategy and Command* in the preparation of the paper was granted by Brig. Gen. James A. Norell, Chief of Military History, Department of the Army.

Dr. Louis Morton is a Professor of History at Dartmouth College and one of this country's best known experts on the history of World War II. From 1946 to 1954, he was Chief of the Pacific Section, Office of the Chief of Military Historians, United States Army. From 1954 to 1960, he served as Deputy Chief Historian for the Army. He wrote *The Fall of the Philippines* (1953) for the official history series *The United States Army in World War II*. Still in preparation for this series are *Strategy and Command: Turning the Tide, 1941-1943* and *Strategy and Command: The Road to Victory, 1943-1945* (coauthor). He also contributed three essays to *Command Decisions* (1959) and has written numerous articles for leading historical and military journals. Dr. Morton has lectured at the National War College and the Army War College and has served as a consultant to this Academy's Department of History. He accepted in 1960 an appointment as a Professor of History at Dartmouth College. He was a former instructor at City College of New York (1939-1941). Dr. Morton received his M.A. from New York University in 1936 and his Ph.D. from Duke University in 1938.

"The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US Air Force, Department of Defense or the US Government."