Joint Terminology
At the Heart of Doctrine

By GEORGE H. HOCK, JR.

Recently, the largest component of the joint force, the U.S. Army, confirmed its new chief of staff, General Martin Dempsey. General Dempsey, speaking 2 days after his nomination, outlined issues that he thinks are important for the Army going forward—one of which is “getting the words right.” Dempsey, who previously commanded U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, emphasized that the Service is making changes to its core doctrine, and for that reason he is serious about getting the definitions right. Words matter. He went on to stress why doctrinal language is so important by quoting Mark Twain: “The difference between the almost-right word and the right word is really a large matter—it’s the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.” Current joint terminology efforts are consistent with its Service counterparts’ commitment to ensuring concise, clear language.

It is Department of Defense (DOD) policy to improve communications and mutual understanding within the department, among other Federal agencies, and between the United States and its international partners through standardization of military and associated terminology. Joint Publication (JP) 1–02, DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms and its associated database are the key documents within the joint doctrine discipline that support this policy. It is the primary terminology source when preparing correspondence, including policy, strategy, doctrine, and planning documents and applies to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Services, Joint Staff, combatant commands, DOD agencies, and all other DOD components. As such, it is by far the most widely referenced document within the entire body of joint doctrine, receiving nearly 250,000 individual page views and 23,000 full document downloads per month.

Over 25 years after the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 mandated “jointness,” Service personnel still sometimes struggle to communicate with one another during joint operations. No doubt there has been marked improvement, but there is room for more. In 1989, OSD decided that joint terminology should be consolidated in one place and managed accordingly. The responsibility was transferred to the J7. The Secretary of Defense, in DOD Directive 5025.12, Standardization of Military and Associated Terminology, directed the use of JP 1–02 (originally called JCS Pub 1) throughout DOD to ensure standardization of military and associated terminology. The idea was not to capture the voluminous Service-specific technical terms but those of a broader nature that have significance in the planning and conduct of joint operations. Currently, there are ongoing initiatives to improve JP 1–02 which include appropriately standardizing and annotating source publications for all entries.

As early as 1993, source documents were identified and noted in JP 1–02 and the newly developed Joint Terminology Master Database (JTMD) in order to provide a contextual basis for proper understanding of each term. Additionally, a process was established for terms to be reviewed regularly as part of the normal revision cycle of the source document to ensure relevance. This methodology of sourcing terms in conjunction with the normal joint doctrine development process continues. Yet even with such a process, entries such as “white cap—a small wave breaking offshore as a result of the action of strong winds. See also wave” remain in JP 1–02. White cap and wave were defined in JP 1–02 almost exactly as they are in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, begging the question of their utility as entries.

In late 2005, however, the joint/Service terminologist’s working group embarked on the sourcing project guided by the mantra “precise terms used precisely” and nears completion today. The results of this multi-phase long-term effort is that from the high water mark of approximately 6,000 DOD and North Atlantic Treaty Organization terms in 2005 in JP 1–02, approximately 2,500 of them (without approved sources and those that are deemed unnecessary) have been removed. The fourth and final term sourcing coordination is in progress. There are still 1,250 terms without sources annotated in JP 1–02, but they have candidate sources identified for resolution during the current JP revision cycle. It should be noted that each removed term is kept if ever needed again, along with over 20,000 other entries in the JTMD archive. Wave is now more appropriately defined in a military context in JP 1–02, but white cap remains a target of our project.

The other joint terminology initiative in progress is standardizing entries by enforcing the brief “Definition Writing Guide” benchmarks. This guide is part of the recently updated Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 5705.01D, “Standardization of Military and Associated Terms,” which governs JP 1–02. Concise terminology is critical to military communication, and the CJCSI guidance makes a stark distinction between desired definitions and unwanted descriptions. A definition is a formal statement of the exact meaning of a term that enables it to be distinguished from any other. A description, in contrast, is a narrative containing informa-
The primary focus of J7 guiding instruction and efforts is to ensure the quality and relevance of entries in JP 1–02 for the user. The U.S. military is the most advanced, specialized, and complex joint force the world has ever seen, which makes a broad, overarching joint lexicon designed to cross-connect operations that much more important. J7 is committed to furthering the mantra of precise terms used precisely and will continue to ensure joint terminology is maintained at the heart of doctrine. JFQ
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Understanding War in Afghanistan
by Joseph J. Collins

The author describes this concise book as an “intellectual primer on war in Afghanistan.” Joseph J. Collins is one of few people qualified to make such a claim. His career as a Soldier, policymaker, and academic has kept him involved for more than 30 years with the various wars in this central Asian country, from the Soviet occupation through current U.S. operations. The book attempts to provide military leaders, civil servants, diplomats, and students with the intellectual basis to prepare for further study of or assignment in Afghanistan. After examining the land, people, and culture, the book covers the history of the country, including the Soviet-Afghan War, the civil war, the advent of the Taliban, the war against the Taliban, and the U.S. effort from 2001 to the present. It also includes a chapter on the theory and practice of counterinsurgency, which Collins describes as essential to understanding the nature of the current conflict. He concludes with the potential choices and issues facing national leaders for the future, notably the necessity for the United States to redouble its efforts in building Afghan capacity so that the country can stand on its own two feet.

PRISM

A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations

PRISM 2, no. 3 (June 2011) takes on a variety of topics on complex operations, although several offerings focus on aspects of criminal activities. The Features section opens with Lieutenant General Robert Caslen and Major Bradley Loudon writing on forging a comprehensive approach to counterinsurgency. The next three articles deal with aspects of the criminal challenge for counterinsurgency and complex operations, and include Douglas Farah on terrorist-criminal pipelines and criminalized states, Colonel Robert Killebrew on criminal insurgency in the Americas, and Professor Bruce Baker on building law-enforcement capacity in Africa. The remaining Feature articles present Professor Stephen Krasner on state-building, the Honorable Franklin Kramer on irregular conflict, Dr. Max Manwaring on three cases of transnational criminal organizations, and Dr. James Carafano on interagency reform. Next, From the Field articles include, from Germany, Dr. James Derleth and Jason Alexander on stability operations; from Haiti, David Becker on gangs and “community counterinsurgency”; and from the Pacific, Dr. Andrew Leith on regional assistance to the Solomon Islands. The Lessons Learned article, by Dr. Stephen Mains and Dr. Gil Ad Ariely, discusses the management of operational knowledge. Finally, the issue concludes with an interview of General David Petraeus.

PRISM explores, promotes, and debates emerging thought and best practices as civilian capacity increases in order to address challenges in stability, reconstruction, security, counterinsurgency, and irregular warfare. Published by NDU Press for the Center for Complex Operations, PRISM welcomes articles on a broad range of complex operations issues, especially civil-military integration. Manuscript submissions should be between 2,500 and 6,000 words and sent via email to prism@ndu.edu.