B–1B Lancer departs Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, on fleet's first combat sortie from continental United States to targets overseas, Operation *Odyssey Dawn*

U.S. Air Force (Marc I. Lane)

Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn

A Model for Joint Experience, Training, and Education

By GREGORY K. JAMES, LARRY HOLCOMB, *and* CHAD T. MANSKE

Operation *Odyssey Dawn* began on March 19, 2011, under the provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1970 and 1973,[1] which authorized states, among other things, to take necessary actions to protect Libyan civilians from government regime violence, enforce an arms embargo, freeze Libyan authorities' assets, and impose a no-fly zone.

Earlier, on March 3, 2011, U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) stood up Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn (JTF OD) under the command of Admiral Samuel Locklear III, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe–Africa. Initially, its mission focused on humanitarian assistance tasks supporting the evacuation of U.S. and third country nationals from Libya, enforcement of a maritime exclusion zone, and enforcement of a no-fly zone. On March 17, following approval of UNSCR 1973, JTF OD began coordinating with coalition forces from both North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and non-NATO countries "to conduct military operations to protect the civilian population from attack or threat of attack."[2]

Two days later, on March 19, 2011, following direction from President Barack Obama, the joint task force began kinetic operations in Libya. Within 3 weeks of its standup, JTF OD conducted a coalition air campaign against Libya's integrated air defense system and subsequently went on to attack and halt the Libyan government advance against rebel-held population centers. During that time, the coalition lost no aircraft to enemy action but lost one aircraft to mechanical failure and successfully recovered both pilots. On March 31, JTF OD transferred command and control of the coalition to NATO, thus successfully achieving both military objectives received from the President and Secretary of Defense.[3]

This article argues that the success of Operation *Odyssey Dawn*, despite its complexity, validates joint planning processes,

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joint education foundations, joint training opportunities, and joint exercises. It examines the genesis, standup, and operation of JTF OD, to include the challenges—or lessons observed—and strengths through the lens of the JTF's use of the Joint Operation Planning Process (JOPP). Finally, this article provides recommendations and observations with respect to the challenges and strengths for the enhancement of the joint force's ability to conduct future operations.

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Odyssey Dawn's origins resulted from the mounting violence of the Libyan regime against its citizens in mid-February 2011. This violence included the use of lethal force against unarmed protestors. Subsequently, around the third week in February, the United Nations passed a unanimous resolution—UNSCR 1970—condemning those actions. UNSCR 1970 was a nonpunitive document calling for an end to the violence and urging Libyan authorities to respect human rights, permit the safe passage of humanitarian supplies, and lift restrictions imposed against the media. It also imposed an arms embargo and implemented sanctions upon key Muammar Qadhafi regime figures, among other things. Collectively, this resolution's tenets became the basis for the United States to lead a coalition of 11 nations in planning for operations enforcing it.[4]

JTF OD was established at Naval Support Facility Capodichino near Naples, Italy.[5] Its mission paralleled the provisions of UNSCR 1970.[6] Following approval of a subsequent resolution—UNSCR 1973—JTF OD quickly shifted focus from humanitarian assistance, mobility, and nonkinetic patrolling to an air campaign that first established air supremacy over the theater of operations, then successfully prevented the Qadhafi regime from committing mass atrocities against rebel-held cities in Libya. The command relationships established for the operation included a joint command element consisting of a commander, foreign policy advisor, deputy commander, chief of staff, and a senior enlisted advisor.[7]

In making up the component commander team, Vice Admiral Harry Harris, U.S. Sixth Fleet Commander, was the joint force maritime component commander; Major General Margaret Woodward, Seventeenth Air Force Commander, was the joint force air component commander; Brigadier General Christopher Haas, USA, Special Operations Command Africa, was the joint special operations task force commander; and Brigadier General Michael Callan, Seventeenth Air Force Vice Commander, led the air component coordination element.[8] No joint force land component commander (JFLCC) was designated for this operation, which is addressed later. The J-staff for *Odyssey Dawn* consisted of directorates J1 through J7, J9, Public Affairs, judge advocate, surgeon, comptroller, and chaplain.[9] The leads and deputies of these directorates were primarily Air Force and Navy officers, the exception being the chief chaplain who was an Army officer. Twenty-eight U.S. and 10 foreign liaison officers (all from Italy, France, and the United Kingdom) supported the J-staff. Additionally, 12 members from U.S. Joint Forces Command's Joint Enabling Capabilities Command's (JECC's) Joint Deployable Team (JDT) augmented the J-staff and liaison officers in their planning efforts, beginning with the JOPP and other processes.[10]

The JOPP and crisis action planning, as outlined in Joint Publication 5–0, *Joint Operation Planning*, provide an ordered, analytical, and logical framework for creatively and critically planning joint operations. This process begins with a study of the operational environment, problem identification, and framing of the process for subsequent mission analysis. To understand the environment in Libya, the most logical place for the JTF to begin was with existing contingency plans. Unfortunately, contingency plans for Libya were outdated by 10 years because relations between the United States and Libya had improved over the years—so much so that the U.S. Department of State had removed Libya from its list of states sponsoring terrorism. Thus, the 6-hour compressed planning effort that ensued with both the USAFRICOM J3/4 and the JECC JDT was without the benefit of a recent contingency plan.[11]

Planning for the maritime exclusion zone (embargo), establishment of a no-fly zone, and potential strike options were discussed during the JOPP.[12] The fleshing out of flexible deterrent options was within the day-to-day skill sets of USAFRICOM planners; however, USAFRICOM had yet to face a kinetic operation since its standup.[13]

Shortly after establishment, the JTF headquarters element began planning.[14] From Naples, Italy, the JTF OD staff relocated aboard the U.S. command and control ship USS *Mount Whitney* in the Mediterranean on March 11, 2011. On March 14, shortly after the ship was under way, the JTF headquarters became certified.[15] Once out to sea, JTF OD staff conducted an "accelerated" JOPP as they received indications, warnings, and political objectives—the latter in the form and substance of the signed UNSCR 1973 and President Obama's speech.[16] The JTF transformed concepts of operations into plans in only a few hours with the goal of beginning kinetic strike operations on the evening of March 19. The JTF established a battle rhythm upon completion of the first evening's strikes, incorporating the sound principles of earlier planning efforts. They also formed a joint interagency coordination group and conducted daily meetings led by the foreign policy advisor, Ambassador Lee Feinstein.[17] According to the JECC, despite compressed planning timelines and processes, the results and products served their ultimate purpose in producing comprehensive plans translating to effective strikes and desired outcomes.[18]

U.S. Navy (Felicito Rustique)

British liaison officer updates commander, Joint Force Maritime Component, on Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn aboard USS *Mount Whitney*

Challenges and Strengths

With the preceding understanding of the genesis of Operation *Odyssey Dawn* and the JTF planning efforts, let us now turn to some of the JTF's planning and execution challenges and strengths. The following are

U.S. Army (Brendan Stephens)

Airmen unload humanitarian supplies from USAID at Djerba-Zarzis International Airport to meet needs of refugees who fled across Libyan border

four challenges—or lessons observed—and five strengths, respectively, of JTF OD planning and execution.

Vague Strategic Guidance. Due to complexities inherent in modern joint operations, planners often receive vague strategic guidance (multiple Operation *Odyssey Dawn* after action reviews reflected this fact). Nonetheless, the JTF's planning efforts resulted in positive outcomes, including a successful embargo, destruction of key regime air defenses, and protection of key population centers.[19] The JTF also faced an evolving military mission (from mostly humanitarian and mobility operations to kinetic operations) with associated changes in objectives and endstates. Key to the positive outcomes was the unrestrained creativity of the USAFRICOM planning staff who continued to proactively ask themselves "Then what?" questions while planning. This helped them anticipate potential courses of action.[20] Key to the success of this effort was the quality of the officers, shaped by their experiences and grounded in quality joint and Service-specific military education. Success was also a result of the foreign policy advisor's and interagency community's involvement in interpreting the President's and Secretary of State's speeches and intent with regard to the political and strategic objectives and how they translated to wielding the military instrument of power.

Absence of a Designated JFLCC. The rationale for not having a JFLCC in JTF OD rested on the assumption that America would not commit its own ground troops to any contingency operation in Libya. However, the U.S.-led coalition ended up conducting operations *against* Libyan ground forces. Hindsight tells us that having dedicated ground force expertise on the JTF staff developing concepts of operations would have provided needed situational awareness. The situation could be remedied in future situations with a small staff of 20 personnel versed in land warfare.[21] JTF OD compensated for the lack of dedicated land component planners by leveraging qualified J-staff personnel and liaison officers.[22]

Battle-rostering. Though USAFRICOM stood up JTF OD, personnel came from multiple combatant commands, nations, and governmental agencies. Furthermore, many of the personnel populating JTF OD had never worked together before, either in training or in previous crisis operations. These facts presented a potential challenge to the JTF's ability to work efficiently from a cold start. Ideally, force providers receive sufficient lead time to identify the correct military specialties and personnel to fill vital billets for a JTF staff. Key to this process is the need to identify an acceptable blend of experience, education, and training. Given the joint nature of American warfare today, many personnel have either the joint education or the joint experience necessary to fulfill their duties as part of a JTF. Our joint force also benefits from its broad experience in coalition warfare and, by design, from the interoperability gained as a member of NATO. The current depth of experience and training in the joint force helped JTF OD achieve success despite the absence of a battle-rostered staff, and despite the inherent complexities of joint and combined operations.[23]

JTF Headquarters Staff Composition and Location. That the JTF commander was also the four-star commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR) and U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) had a positive bearing on the synergy, focus, and coordination of the operation's planning and outcomes. Some may question the logic of designating an already dual-hatted four-star component commander as the JTF commander, but in this instance it was a plus.[24] In addition to commanding NAVEUR and NAVAF, Admiral Samuel Locklear commanded NATO's Allied Joint Force Command, Naples, which gave him instant credibility to lead coalition forces and proved beneficial for the handoff of the mission to NATO, under Operation *Unified Protector*, at the end of March. Finally, the JTF deputy commander, joint force maritime component commander and his deputy, air component coordination element, and 23 of 28 U.S. liaison officers were also on board USS *Mount Whitney* facilitating clearer communications and synergy among the planning staff.

Combatant Command Overlap. It is commonly thought that the more personnel and equities involved in the planning process, the more convoluted, confusing, and time-consuming it is. This is normally a truism, and in this case, there were two distinct combatant commands involved: U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and USAFRICOM. This friction was eased, however, as the established combatant command (USEUCOM), with its own forces and a history of working Africa issues, worked in conjunction with a newer, less established combatant command (USAFRICOM) with a smaller staff and fewer personnel. For JTF OD, these commands' staffs integrated and complemented one another, producing a result exponentially greater than the sum of its parts.[25] Key to this result seemed to be the close preexisting relationships built by corresponding functional areas across each combatant command as well as a foundation of joint education and training by its members.[26]

Regional Exercises. Robust regional exercises positively contributed to Operation *Odyssey Dawn*'s outcome. USEUCOM conducts a yearly three-star joint and combined exercise called Austere Challenge, which enables Service components to execute full-scale operations at the JTF level. The planning, execution, and relationship-building of such an exercise cannot be overstated. This exercise in particular had a catalyzing effect upon JTF OD since many of the key players had exercised and worked together during previous Austere Challenge events.[27] Thus, when it came time to constitute the JTF OD team, a high level of comfort and confidence in the leadership group facilitated accelerated planning efforts by which everyone became synchronized. Another positive outcome of this approach was the complete airing out of the coalitions' national needs, objectives, and interests prior to their commitment to the operation. Despite the time-consuming negotiating process that history has shown this to be, an established exercise foundation made it easier for the transition to a NATO-controlled operation at the end of March.[28]

U.S. Government and Military Involvement. According to the JTF command team, the involvement of multiple levels of the U.S. Government and military was a strength in both planning and execution.[29] Modern communications technology such as the TANDBERG secure video-teleconferencing system allowed multiple entities to communicate diverse perspectives bearing constructively on the planning, decisionmaking, and execution aspects of the operation.[30]

Coalition and Team-building. During the early March planning efforts as the coalition began to form and subscribe to the objectives of the operation, it became clear that years of joint exercises, training, and education at the senior military levels made a positive difference during planning and execution.[31] Nine of the 11 coalition nations/members were part of NATO, and it was evident that this operation constituted as quickly and smoothly as it did because of "decades of NATO existence and cooperation."[32] Just as joint exercises, training, and education enhanced multiple levels of involvement as noted above, modern communications (for example, electronic chat, email, and video-teleconferencing) also enhanced the team-orientation aspects of the operation's execution. This not only affected the speed by which planning and execution at the JTF level occurred, but it also more precisely allowed commander's intent to project directly from the commander to key leaders daily, and sometimes multiple times a day. Commanders' involvement in the back-and-forth dialogue enhanced team-building and ensured that intent was well understood before in-depth planning progressed further.

Flexibility and Adaptability. Early in the planning process, the JTF made it clear to the planners and staff that they would adhere to the mission objectives derived directly from UNSCR 1973.[33] In doing so, component command planners had a clear understanding of the foundation from which to plan and harmonized with one another for mission success. The components' understanding allowed flexibility to plan and execute and served as one of the greatest strengths of the JTF staff during Operation *Odyssey Dawn*.[34] It also quickly enabled a smoother transition of the operation to NATO control. Because the United States conducted its operations through adherence to the provisions of UNSCR 1973, and communicated that intent through the chain of command up front, legitimacy—a principle of joint operations—became the foundation for coalition buy-in and sustained involvement.

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Recommendations and Observations

While these challenges and strengths offer a foundation for discussion, they also help validate the strengths of our JTFs—joint education, training, exercises, and

U.S. Air Force (Jerry Morrison)

Director of Joint Chiefs of Staff indicates where coalition forces launched Operation *Odyssey Dawn* to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1973 against Libya

Marines help injured man disembark from KC–130J in Cairo during Operation *Odyssey Dawn*

U.S. Marine Corps (Tammy Hineline)

experience—and lead to the following recommendations and observations.

Vague Strategic Guidance. There is nothing new about the uncertainty associated with strategic guidance. Ensuring that foreign policy advisors and interagency personnel stay engaged in contingency and crisis action planning efforts, however, helps mitigate the risk of military planners being out of synch with national leadership. It also keeps them aimed at a whole-of-government approach. This was demonstrated during Operation *Odyssey Dawn* as the JTF's foreign policy advisor employed his understanding of the political and strategic objectives coupled with his experience in guiding the JTF to success.

Absence of a Designated JFLCC. JTFs should consider the composition of the adversary when forming its own structure, even if ground troops are not employed on the friendly side. Filling every key position of a JTF staff will enhance understanding of the operational environment and can multiply the effects and outcomes of the planning process and subsequent operation execution. In future operations where U.S. ground forces are not employed, consideration of a JFLCC team to conduct planning and provide input covering some or all of the functions is essential.

Battle-rostering. More time spent in identifying a minimum level of joint education, training, and experience of potential JTF staff personnel for participation on a JTF staff will enhance productivity and smooth planning processes and subsequent planning cycles. It will also serve to strengthen the joint force. Additionally, battle rosters with the appropriate and required skill sets should be pre-identified during contingency planning and readily available when crises occur.

JTF Headquarters Staff Composition and Location. Continue identifying officers with a broad resume of joint education, training, and experience to fill critical command and leadership positions on JTF staffs. To the extent possible, JTF component commanders should be geographically and physically located in close proximity to one another—preferably together—to enable better communications and higher quality planning. In this operation, the majority of the key commanders and staff, except the joint force air component commander and joint special operations task force, were collocated aboard the USS *Mount Whitney*, which contributed greatly to unity of command and unity of effort.

Combatant Command Overlap. Continue to identify and send the maximum number of key personnel working on joint and combatant command staffs to joint education schools where thinking and planning come together in the ideal preparatory laboratory for the planning and conduct of future joint operations. In cases in which combatant commands share forces as directed by the Unified Command Plan, combatant command staffs must deconflict manpower requirements during contingency and crisis action planning.

Regional Exercises. Both tangible and intangible value results from conducting large-scale exercises led by three- and four-star officers. However, the availability of time, resources, manpower, and funding often drive real-world combatant command priorities, resulting in cancelling these exercises. Operation *Odyssey Dawn* validated the importance of exercises such as Austere Challenge because of the joint, coalition, and NATO training return on the investment. Continuation of three- and four-star exercises should remain high on a combatant commander's and Service component commander's list of priorities.

U.S. Government and Military Involvement. Operation *Odyssey Dawn* reinforced the need to continue striving for personnel outside the military serving as part of the joint planning and execution community—particularly nonmilitary interagency personnel—to attend U.S. military joint professional military education schools and courses. Likewise, DOD should consider increased participation of military personnel in other U.S. agency/department education (for example, the

ensuring that foreign policy advisors and interagency personnel stay engaged in planning efforts helps mitigate the risk of military planners being out of synch with national leadership

Foreign Service Institute). The more personnel who possess this education, the better the common understanding of terminology, processes, and value such personnel will be to the JTF, which will likely result in planning from a more common framework.

Coalition and Team-building. Continue ensuring that robust and flexible communications are part of JTF deployment kits. Senior leaders also need the proper training to use information systems to their full potential. Though there were minor communications and computer connectivity challenges for the JTF from aboard USS *Mount Whitney*, most issues were easily surmountable.[35] Commander's intent is also easier to communicate and understand when key personnel and planners operate in as close physical proximity as conditions permit.

Flexibility and Adaptability. The final observation, which is tied to the first insight above, is that once JTF military planners receive clear political and strategic objectives, they quickly synchronize in the direction the planning effort should take. The flexibility and adaptability that the joint force possesses is a valuable force multiplier worth continued cultivation in our joint doctrine, education, exercises, and whole-of-government approach.

USAFRICOM successfully executed its first major contingency operation. Notwithstanding its short duration of active kinetic operations, Operation *Odyssey Dawn* achieved the limited military objectives directed by the President and Secretary of Defense in support of UNSCR 1973. Contributing to that success was the strong combination of joint education, training, and experiences that the JTF headquarters staff possessed. Relationships built by members of the JTF OD team throughout the course of their careers, including joint and combined assignments, laid a foundation for the trust demonstrated by senior leaders of the coalition.[36] These factors allowed a U.S.-led coalition to "go from nothing to kinetic strike operations in a mere three weeks,"[37] while controlling and sustaining the speed and pace for weeks thereafter. The combination of these factors, accumulated throughout the careers of our military personnel, still serves as an overwhelming strength worthy of continued emulation. **JFQ**

U.S. Navy (Jonathan Sunderman)

Commander, Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn, talks with sailors aboard USS *Barry* moored at Augusta Bay, Italy

NOTES

[1] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970 is available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/245/58/PDF/N1124558.pdf?OpenElement>.

[2] Available at <www.naveur-navaf.navy.mil/odysseydawn/index.html>.

[3] Interview with Joint Enabling Capabilities Command's (JECC's) Joint Deployable Team (JDT) members Commander John Menoni, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Hughes, and Lieutenant Commander Haley Dunn, July 20, 2011. Eleven other JECC JDT members went to work/liaise on the U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) staff.

[4] Major General Mark Zamzow, USAF, and Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn Deputy Commander, "Ensuring Freedom's Future—Recent Contingency Ops in USAFE," briefing, slide 19.

[5] Telephone interview with Major General Mark Zamzow, August 8, 2011; and "Ensuring Freedom's Future," slide 18.

[6] "To conduct military operations to protect the civilian population from attack or threat of attack, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973; to establish a no-fly zone to help prevent mass atrocities; and to enforce an arms embargo to prevent the flow of arms and armed mercenaries from being used against civilians," available at <www.naveur-navaf.navy.mil/odysseydawn/index.html>.

[7] "Ensuring Freedom's Future," slide 26.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] JECC JDT interview.

[11] Ibid. Confirmed also by interview with Zamzow.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid. The JECC noted that "USAFRICOM was not trained, organized or staffed for a hot war" going into the planning effort.

[14] "Ensuring Freedom's Future," slide 18.

[15] JECC JDT interview.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Zamzow interview.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] JECC JDT interview; Zamzow interview.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Zamzow interview.

[26] Ibid. Zamzow was convinced that the value of joint education, and specifically joint professional military education II, was the greatest factor in this outcome.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid. Zamzow noted that being under way limited the number of key players who could be physically present due to berthing space or other reasons for key discussion during planning and execution. He noted that USS *Mount Whitney*'s communications capabilities were exceptional and served as a force multiplier in daily discussions.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid. Zamzow noted that preexisting relationships between American and coalition officers from either professional military education courses and/or joint/combined assignments facilitated the operation's success.

[37] Ibid.