



# ***National Defense University***

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## ***Why We Fight Jointly***

**Keystone 26-1**

**January 2026**



# Overview

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- **Establishment of Unified Commands**
  - **Origin**
  - **Outline Command Plan**
  - **National Security Act of 1947**
  - **Reorganization Act of 1958**
  - **Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986**
  - **Future?**



# Origin

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***“ We must never fight another war the way we fought the last two.***

***I have a feeling that if the Army and Navy had fought our enemies as hard as they fought each other, the war would have ended much earlier.”***

**President Truman**



# ***Outline Command Plan***

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- **1946 Chief of Naval Operations (FADM Nimitz) characterized the Pacific command as “ambiguous and unsatisfactory.”**
  - **Identified need for a “PLAN”**
  - **Pres Truman created the “Outline Command Plan” in Dec 1946 (The first UCP), Highlighting Seven Joint Commands**



# ***Outline Command Plan***

## ***Seven Joint Commands***

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- **Far East**
- **Pacific**
- **Alaskan**
- **Northeast**
- **Atlantic Fleet**
- **Caribbean**
- **European**



# ***National Security Act Of 1947***

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- **Created:**
- **Air Force**
- **Central Intelligence Agency**
- **Office of the Secretary of Defense**
- **Also created the Unified Combatant Command , so the US would continue to have a world-wide, continuous global military presence**
- **Also gave the Joint Chiefs of Staff the responsibility to establish unified commands for “strategic areas”**



# ***Reorganization Act Of 1958***

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- **Pres Eisenhower sought “a complete unification of all military planning and combat forces and commands”**
  - **Proposed the Reorganization Act to amend the National Security Act of 1947**
- **Authorized the President to establish unified or specified commands, assign missions, and determine their force structure**



# ***Goldwater-Nichols Act Of 1986***

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- **Iran Hostage situation and the invasion of Grenada highlighted the need for “jointness”**
- **Goldwater-Nichols sought to “rebalance the relative power of geographic commands versus the services”**
- **Enhanced the authority of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and Combatant Commanders, facilitating increased engagement with Congress and the Department of Defense (DoD) budget process**



# ***Governing Laws***

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- **COCOMs are governed in Subtitle A; Section 161 through 168 of Title 10**
  - **Section 161: Establishment of COCOMS**
  - **Section 162: Chain Of Command and Forces**
  - **Section 163: Role of CJCS**
  - **Section 164: Assignment and Duties of CDR**
  - **Section 165: Admin and Support COCOMS**
  - **Section 166-168: Budget/Special Requirements**



## ***President/CJCS Role***

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- ***The President, except in times of hostilities or imminent danger, will notify Congress not less than 60 days after establishing a new COCOM or significant revision of an existing COCOM by recommendation from the CJCS to the SD***
- ***CJCS will review missions, structure, AOR's and Forces at least every 4 years and recommend to the President through the SECDEF any changes***



## ***Chain of Command***

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- **Chain of Command starts with the President and flows through the SECDEF to the Combatant Commander. The CJCS serves as the Global Integrator and the Senior Uniformed advisor to the SECDEF and Commander in Chief.**



# *Commander*

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- **Each COCOM is command by a four-star General or Admiral**
  - **Recommended by the SECDEF**
  - **Nominated by the President**
  - **Confirmed by the Senate Armed Forces Committee**



# ***COCOM Structure***

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- **J-1 Manpower and Personnel**
  
- **J-2 Intelligence**
  
- **J-3 Operations**
  
- **J-4 Logistics**
  
- **J-5 Strategic Plans and Policy**



# ***COCOM Structure***

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- **J-6 Command, Control, Communication, and Computer**
- **J-7 Operational Planning and Joint Force Development**
- **J-8 Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment**
- **J-9 Interagency Partnering**



# *Interagency Representation*

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- **Are imbedded in COCOMs structure to enhance operations**
  - **Example: USAFRICOM – A State Department Deputy Commander for Civil-Military Activities, a senior U.S. Agency for International Development Advisor, and two other senior U.S. diplomats who serve as a Foreign Policy Advisor and the J-9, Director of Outreach**

# Unified Command Plan



Functional (Global) Combatant Commands

# Unified Command Plan ...FUTURE?



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAY 0 5 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP

SUBJECT: General/Flag Officer Reductions

The Department of Defense is committed to ensuring the lethality of U.S. Military Forces to deter threats and, when necessary, achieve decisive victory. To accomplish this mission, we must cultivate exceptional senior leaders who drive innovation and operational excellence, unencumbered by unnecessary bureaucratic layers that hinder their growth and effectiveness.

A critical step in this process is removing redundant force structure to optimize and streamline leadership by reducing excess general and flag officer positions. Therefore, I direct the following actions:

- A minimum 20% reduction of 4-star positions across the Active Component;
- A minimum 20% reduction of general officers in the National Guard; and
- An additional minimum 10% reduction in general and flag officers with the realignment of the Unified Command Plan.

Through these measures, we will uphold our position as the most lethal fighting force in the world, achieving peace through strength and ensuring greater efficiency, innovation, and preparedness for any challenge that lies ahead.



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Newsweek



# *Questions*

**KEYSTONE 26-1**

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