

# **Normalizing the Space Domain**

By Maj. Joe Mroszczyk

**W**ith so much talk about space as a warfighting domain, when will it actually be treated with the same weight of effort and investment given to the other domains? The train of thought is moving forward, but slowly.

Why so slowly? Because the U.S. military has not put in place the force structure and space subject-matter experts (SMEs) where the Joint Force plans and executes a campaign: at the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs).

I believe there are misconceptions leading to the continued lack of space SMEs at the GCCs. First, the GCCs and U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) believe that the Joint Force Space Component Commander will take care of the heavy lifting for them.

Yes, USSTRATCOM is the functional combatant command responsible for space operations and defense of the domain. But in order to integrate with the GCCs who have responsibility for planning and executing campaign plans where the world's populations live, the GCCs need people who can support that effort for every domain the United States and potential adversaries operate in.

The second misconception relates to why the GCCs have not realized this is a problem and thereby generated the demand signal for it. This second misconception relates to a lack of general understanding of Space Coordinating Authority (SCA) and the Director of Space Forces (DS4) construct.

Most space practitioners are told that SCA is normally delegated to the air component supporting a GCC and that the DS4 exercises SCA on behalf of that component. The misconception is that the DS4 has a robust staff and also leads all other GCC space-related efforts.

## **Campaign Planning**

While the DS4 may have a few space SMEs at the component level, they are not resourced to support campaign planning for the GCC and are often limited to fielding Space Support Requests from the components as a conduit to the Joint Force Space Component Commander. Meanwhile, the Army's Space Support Element is appropriately focused on the land component's space-related concerns, rather than planning space aspects of the GCC's campaign. There is no robust space element at the GCC to coordinate the efforts between each of the components, and there is a lack of strategic integration as a result.

For at least a decade, deployed joint force headquarters have relied on space SME augmentation to their staffs in order to conduct essential planning and integration of space effects. Currently, space SMEs are typically alerted when a contingency or crisis arises and deployed as augmentees to support coordination in operations. By the time they arrive, their integration is too late to influence initial campaign planning.

Subsequent integration efforts are further handicapped by the significant learning burden levied on the augmentees who are usually space professionals with no understanding of the GCC and component boards, bureaus, centers, cells and working groups or the position they fall in to augment.

For instance, a space professional sent to augment a GCC in a 2017 exercise was normally assigned to a satellite operations unit and had never been to a GCC exercise before. She was expected to support space targeting efforts and perform additional duties assigned by the DS4 staff. She adapted, learned on the job and performed well by the end of the exercise.

Will the GCC have time for this type of learning curve in a real crisis? While many GCC staff elements utilize augmentation, the other warfighting domains have a much more substantial core of expertise.

### **Joint Space Element**

The few people at the GCC working on space operations are too busy keeping their heads above water to advocate for help. In order to ensure space operations are adequately considered for every undertaking at the GCC, space SMEs forming a Joint Space Element as part of the GCC's organic staff structure would need to participate in each of the applicable boards, bureaus, centers, cells and working groups as part of the daily battle rhythm. But how can the space SMEs influence the plan or for that matter generate the GCC demand for additional space requirements without being part of the GCC Integrated Priority List process?

This is, in part, the conundrum explaining why there is a lack of space professionals at the GCCs. It is understandable that the military would focus less effort on a domain that does not contain permanent residents. However, one would think that due to the complexity and importance of the domain, a representative proportion of subject-matter expertise would be dedicated to the planning and integration of operations related to it.

How many space-focused positions should there be at the GCC? The right answer is unknown at this point, but the percentage of the GCC staff currently conducting campaign planning and integration of space operations suggests that the numbers are far out of proportion to the need.

For all but STRATCOM and U.S. Northern Command, the number is at or below one percent including space-coded representatives from every military service. This slim percentage of space SMEs at each GCC could not conceivably provide enough support to planning and integration of every joint function for space (Fires, Movement and Maneuver, Protection, Sustainment, Command and Control, and Intelligence)

### **Near-Term Fix and Long-Term Investment**

This shortfall requires both a near-term fix and a long-term investment. A potential short-term fix would be to recognize that the delegation of SCA and coordination of Space Support Requests is a construct created in a relatively benign space environment and requires adjustment for more complex current and future circumstances.

This adjustment could come in the form of the GCC rescinding that delegation and pulling space SMEs up from each of the components to form a minimalist Joint Space Element. This is different from the deployment of Space Support Teams as depicted in the 2002 Joint Publication 3-14, *Space Operations*, when U.S. Space Command was still in existence. The Joint Space Element would be a permanent presence at the GCC and would focus on more than just Space Force Enhancement. The chief of the Joint Space Element could be from any service and would exercise Space Coordinating Authority at the GCC.

In the long term, this structure would need to grow, and other command arrangements should be considered. For instance, a Joint Space Headquarters Forward could be assigned to Joint Forces Space Component Command under USSTRATCOM and attached to each supported GCC to further assist with the integration of space operations by the functional combatant command responsible for the national-level execution of space operations. This arrangement would allow the Joint Space Element to utilize USSTRATCOM-assigned personnel toward direct support of GCC planning and operations.

Such a construct will have a financial cost. Military space practitioners need to honestly ask if the force structure used today for augmentation (for example, Army Space Support Teams) would be better utilized at the GCC. The GCCs and the Joint Staff also need to take a hard look at the balance of domain focus and see where potential bill payers may be replaced by space professionals.

In a time when some members of Congress are questioning why the Department of Defense is not doing more and even considering the implementation of a Space Force, the steps outlined here contribute to a more effective use of space personnel and capabilities.

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