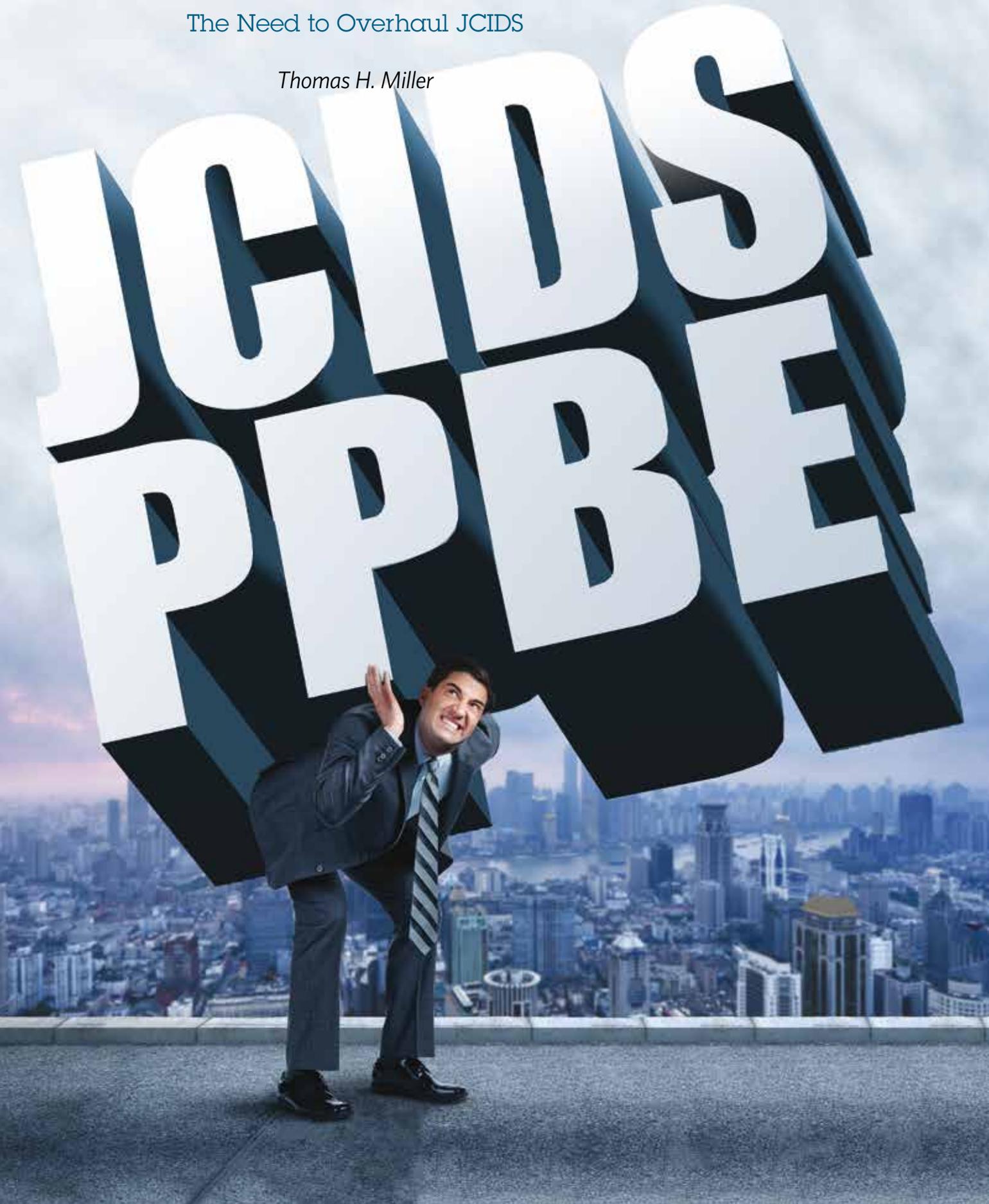


# Requirements Management

The Need to Overhaul JCIDS

*Thomas H. Miller*



**A**quisition reform continues to receive a great deal of attention from both the Senate and House Armed Service Committees. Reform initiatives to date tend to focus exclusively on the “little a” puzzle piece of the defense acquisition process—i.e., the Defense Acquisition System (DAS).

The other two pieces of the “big A” process—the requirements system (Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System [JCIDS]) and the financial system (Program Planning Budgeting and Execution [PPBE])—to date have had a free pass from Congress; yet these processes share a good portion of the blame for continuing poor results from acquisition programs.

The JCIDS process in particular requires a complete overhaul because it is too bureaucratic and cumbersome to keep up with the speed of the current information age technology development cycle. It has been assessed by Bill Greenwalt of the American Enterprise Institute as “one of the few processes that is even more dysfunctional than the acquisition process”; and described by other authors as “byzantine” and “one of the most inscrutable strands of Pentagon red tape.” The Joint Chiefs of Staff offices that run the process are overstuffed, inefficient, and require major streamlining to become more responsive and effective. Michele Flournoy, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, said that, “The Joint Staff and the Office of the Chairman have grown to nearly 4,000 people ... the staff should be smaller and more focused on providing advice to the president,” noting that bloated headquarters staffs “undermine both performance and agility.”

JCIDS was implemented in 2003, at the direction of then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, with the intention that it should emphasize joint requirements development and in order to establish an analytical process for identifying potential material and non-material solutions for validated capability gaps. The Defense Acquisition Portal further explains the purpose of JCIDS: “The JCIDS process exists to support Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) responsibilities in identifying, assessing, validating, and prioritizing joint military capability requirements. JCIDS provides a transparent process that allows the JROC to balance joint equities and make informed decisions on validation and prioritization of capability requirements.” Yet, both the Congress and its investigatory arm, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), have questioned whether the system is effective in meeting joint force needs; and the DoD acknowledged to the GAO in 2012 that JCIDS has been ineffective in helping the JROC carry out its responsibilities. What are the specific problems associated with the JCIDS process, and how can they be fixed to produce a nimble and responsive requirements development system that still supports the JROC’s Title 10 responsibilities to help the CJCS (1) identify, assess and improve joint military requirements; (2) establish and assign priority levels for joint military requirements; (3) review the estimated levels of resources

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required to fulfill joint requirements; and (4) make trade-offs between cost, schedule and performance constraints?

The following is a short summary of the problems that I see, followed by a very compressed overview of possible steps to make the JCIDS process more effective.

**Problem 1:** The JCIDS process is too slow and bureaucratic. The process is extremely complex and requires a long series of successive “heel to toe” steps intended to ensure that the analytical and staffing elements of the process are followed and fully documented. “Capability sponsors” (generally, the requirements organizations within the Services, such as the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC]), are

requirements documents. Other changes limited page lengths to force concise documents; established staffing targets of 83 (later 97) days for the deliberate process and 15 to 31 days for the urgent/emergent process. Other changes created a more robust “tripwire” process that requires sponsors to return to the JROC for Cost, Schedule and/or Performance slips.

While laudable, it is doubtful that these changes actually reduced the estimated 15 to 20 months required to gain final approval of a requirements document. The complex process continues to drive increased, time-consuming analysis, reviews and staffing within the Services before they submit the requirements documents into KM/DS for JS review. In addition, documents frequently are returned to the Service



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required to create their requirements documents in JCIDS-standard format, gain endorsement from Joint Staff (JS) offices on applicable content (e.g., J4 endorsement of the Energy key performance parameter [KPP]), and then submit the documents to the J8 (Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment Directorate) “Gatekeeper” through the JS mandatory requirements document database, Knowledge Management and Distribution System (KM/DS). In addition, there are several levels of review, including Functional Capabilities Board (FCB) and Joint Capabilities Board (JCB) reviews, before the document even makes it to the JROC. This is particularly true for requirements documents (primarily those that lead to Acquisition Category (ACAT) ID programs) that are designated as “JROC Interest” and that, therefore, require JROC approval.

The JS/JROC staffing and review process is performed in addition to (and generally duplicative of) the staffing and review process within the sponsoring Service. In 2010, Gen. James (“Hoss”) Cartwright initiated an end-to-end review of JCIDS in order to improve the process’ responsiveness and decision support to the JROC. This resulted in major rewrites of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 5123.01—the JROC Charter, CJCSI 3170.01—JCIDS, and the JCIDS Manual in Jan 2012. Changes to the process included creating three potential process “lanes” for different circumstances—the traditional process for deliberate requirements documents, and streamlined review processes for emergent and urgent

sponsor by the J8 Gatekeeper for revisions, often for formatting; restarting the staffing clock. Finally, the expedited review process for Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statement /Joint Emergent Operational Needs is a good initiative, but very few documents will go down these lanes. Better to create a single process that expedites review and approval of all requirements documents.

**Problem 2:** Hierarchical review slowed by a bloated JS organization. The JCIDS process is hierarchical, with requirements and approvals flowing from the JROC back to the Service sponsors. The sponsor organizations have very little influence on the process, other than through the “Old Boy Network” (i.e., some General Officers who seek to influence their peers on the JROC and/or JCB). This in itself defeats the purpose of independent review.

This process has driven a significant increase in the JS military and civilian organization structure (the overall organic government personnel on the JS exceed 4,000, with an unknown—but probably much larger—number of support contractors).

Many of these people—including the members of the JCB and JROC—lack the technical expertise and experience needed to fully understand the requirements in the documents (the GAO noted that the House Armed Services Committee “received testimony that the Joint Staff lacked some of the analytical ex-

pertise necessary to ensure that the JCIDS process rigorously vets proposed requirements ... and we noted that capability needs continued to be proposed and defined by the Services with little involvement from the joint community”). And the personnel generally are not trained in the acquisition process. All of these factors combine to create an overly bureaucratic, complex process that involves excessive reviews by multiple layers. This ultimately slows the “big A” acquisition process with little real return on this investment in time.

**Problem 3:** Multiple analytical reviews and KPPs that drive cost and limit trade space. The hierarchical JCIDS process—driven by a risk-averse culture’s need for top-down control—has resulted in establishment of a significant number of mandatory KPPs. The “AcqNotes.Com” website defines a KPP as “key system capabilities that must be met in order for a system to meet its operational goals.”

KPPs are intended to be kept to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure operational effectiveness, in order to allow maximum flexibility so the program manager can seek the most technically capable, affordable material solution and propose appropriate trade-offs with requirements (KPPs aren’t tradeable).

Multiple mandatory KPPs significantly reduce that flexibility, increase cost, and limit access to technical solutions that may provide greater overall capability. There are currently six JCIDS-directed mandatory KPPs: (1) Force Protection; (2) System Survivability; (3) Sustainment; (4) Net-Ready; (5) Energy; and (6) Training. All of these KPPs cause the Service sponsors to spend significant time and resources on analytical efforts for each KPP. Moreover, review and endorsement of each KPP must be coordinated with the applicable JS office.

In addition, JCIDS mandates a torturous capability gap analysis process prior to creation of the first requirements document—the Initial Capability Document (ICD)—culminating in a Capabilities Based Assessment (CBA). This analytical process extends document processing time and consumes significant resources, often into the millions of dollars (many studies are contracted out, of course). But, again, this adds little value to defining the requirements for the ultimate material solution. As Dr. Michael Cochrane has written: “The problem is that the capabilities-based reality has never quite lived up to the capabilities-based theory ... so-called ‘gap analyses’ are nothing more than highly subjective, qualitative statements ... there is nothing rigorous or analytical about this, so why beat around the bush? If the joint force commander wants more ‘x’, just ask for more ‘x!’”

**Problem 4:** Too many requirements documents. Preparing the three requirements documents—the ICD, the Capability Development Document (CDD), and the Capability Production Document (CPD)—requires extensive analysis and resources. All three require separate, lengthy staffing/review cycles—again slowing the overall “Big A” acquisition process. The idea

behind having three separate documents is that the required capabilities are defined and documented in increasing detail as knowledge is gained while the acquisition program progresses through its life cycle. However, little additional knowledge is gained from developing and staffing the ICD and CDD—at least not enough to justify the resources and time required to staff and prepare the documents. Regardless of the theory, the Service sponsors generally know what material solution they want at time of ICD (and earlier). Working with their acquisition counterparts, the sponsors conduct enough market research to know the capability of the potential systems or technologies available in the marketplace.

**Problem 5:** JS/JROC review adds little value. The vast majority of the documents reviewed by the JROC and subordinate boards are approved without comment. This is due to several of the reasons cited above, including lack of subject-matter expertise on the JS and a collegial culture that discourages JCB/JROC general officers from disapproving or changing requirements put forward by their peers. Very few of the documents result in JROC memorandums that direct changes in requirements based on trade-offs among cost, schedule and performance constraints, or that direct the Services to seek joint material solutions. The JCIDS process therefore results in spending vast resources and slowing the acquisition and fielding of military equipment. But based on the low percentage of documents disapproved or changed, this work provides a very poor return on this investment in funds and time.

In summary, the JCIDS process’ multiple steps and multiple review layers slow requirements document validation to a crawl, while the process itself—as well as the large JS organization that sustains it—adds little toward providing the warfighters with better and faster technical capabilities. The Service sponsors spend months and often millions of dollars complying with the “byzantine” JCIDS process, but at the end the vast majority of the documents are “rubberstamped” in the JS/JROC review.

When he initiated his JCIDS review initiative, Cartwright said: “We’re starting to rewrite JCIDS. It has been gamed to death and we’re going to throw it away. Unfortunately, they didn’t do that. Instead, they have initiated changes that double down on the current model; primarily because the JS JCIDS team—like the proverbial fox guarding the hen house—implemented the changes. I believe that the DoD (and the taxpayer) can get better value—and a much more streamlined requirements review—by taking a few simple steps to streamline the process:

- Reduce JS/JROC involvement to the bare minimum required to meet the intent of Title 10 responsibilities and delegate the remaining authority to the Services.
- Require JROC review of requirements documents only for Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAPs), do away with the FCB and JCB pre-reviews, and delegate all other reviews/approvals to the Services.

- Conduct periodic JS/JROC-led portfolio reviews that focus on ensuring that the Services pursue joint material and non-material solutions to capability requirements, and that overall requirements are aligned to strategic, Combatant Commander, and budgetary priorities.
- The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), and JS Vice Chairman co-chair both JROC and Acquisition Milestone reviews, ensuring active coordination and trade-off agreements between the three “circles” of the “Big A” Acquisition process.
- Allow the Services tailoring of the analytical requirements—particularly CBAs—to the program requirements.
- Replace the current three requirements documents with a single common document, called a Capability Requirements Document (CRD), that is approved once prior to Milestone B, and only updated thereafter as required by fact-of-life changes.
- Eliminate all mandatory KPPs, and make the current six (6) mandatory KPPs optional for use by the Service sponsors as applicable to the specific acquisition program.
- Significantly reduce the number of personnel in the JS organization that support the JCIDS and JROC to a core professional staff that is fully trained and certified in Requirements Management, Acquisition, and Financial Management.

The goal of these changes is to simplify the overall process, push decision authority down to the level appropriate for a risk-informed culture, reduce overall cycle time, reduce requirements development costs, and allow the JS/JROC to focus on their core missions of providing advice to the president and (at a much higher level) prioritizing joint military capability requirements.

The current JCIDS process is typical of the top-down Pentagon hierarchical control processes in force since World War II. Unfortunately, the process moves too slowly to keep up with the light-speed pace of the evolving threats that it is intended to counter and much too slow to acquire and field the technologies required to fill 21st century capability gaps. (As noted by former Air Force Vice-Chief of Staff for Intelligence Lt. Gen. David Deptula, “Al Qaeda doesn’t have a JCIDS process ... we need to be able to operate much quicker and inside our adversary’s decision loop.”) In order to make the process more effective in terms of staying ahead of the threat curve, the DoD will need to sacrifice control for speed by allowing the Services more authority to seek innovative solutions and to more rapidly acquire new, cutting-edge technologies (both hardware and software) and get them in the hands of the warfighter. 🇺🇸

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