Military Services Aim for Joint Systems to Optimize Multi-Domain Operations

Connected efforts will make the military more agile, leaders argue.

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The Joint All-Domain Command and Control Campaign Plan Experiment 2 allowed the sharing of near-real-time information to enable sensor to shooter linkages and display it on a common operational picture. Photo Credit: Jonathan Koester/DVIDS

Military leaders are looking to create a synergistic and integrated approach to modernization across the services to improve mission and operations.
Army Futures Command and the Air Force, in particular, are working in a connected rather than coordinated way to achieve better multi-domain operations through the Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2). The initiative aims to connect all sensors from all services into one network.

“None of us are going to do this alone,” said Army Futures Command Commanding Gen. John Murray at this week's Defense News Conference. “You have to build synergy, not just joint cooperation after joint cooperation. It has to be joint synergy across all warfighting domains. And, I would add, it has to be done with our closest allies and partners. ... We won’t do it without other nations along with us as well.”

“As we have walked the journey of figuring out what JADC2 means for context in the service of the joint force, as we did our experiments and our war games and looked at the analysis, we saw how important it is,” said Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategy, Integration and Requirements Lt. Gen. Clinton Hinote. "If we’re going to fight that way, though, we have to be much more unified in the way that we fight."

With the connected nature of efforts like JADC2, the services will benefit in the agility, speed and scale of operations to match those of U.S. adversaries, Hinote said.

To get to this integrated combat and command system, Murray said that JADC2 will start to push for open IT architecture, one that’s more software-defined rather than hardware-defined. Not only will this help the mission of JADC2, Murray argued, but it will also help the services change their modernization efforts into more iterative, Agile processes.

“If you look at the Army’s history, we modernize in a big way about every 40 years," Murray said. "We have to get away from the thought process that we can use the same equipment for 30 or 40 years, bring it back into the shop to fix."

Hinote calls this approach a “digital design” framework, which he said will not only allow the Defense Department to be faster and more accurate about the types of weapons systems that it builds and maintains, but also hold the potential to allow for DOD to drive efficiency into its systems acquisitions processes. Acquisition, he said, will be centered around the Agile design approaches rather than one that focuses on sustainment of legacy systems.
These integrated, agile and iterative approaches are fueling the synergistic future of the military’s services, Murray and Hinote said. As Army Futures Command looks toward advanced artificial intelligence and systems capabilities, it will also rope in partners like the Air Force with initiatives like Project Convergence, an annual effort that brings together military innovators to explore new connected systems and application uses in joint operations.