Airmen and Soldiers from Kadena Air Base perform high-altitude, low-opening jump off MC-130J Commando II above Okinawa, April 24, 2017 (U.S. Air Force/John Linzmeier)

Toward a More Lethal, Flexible, and Resilient Joint Force Rediscovering the Purpose of JPME II

By Charles Davis and Frederick R. Kienle

he defense and military strategies of Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford thoughtfully focus the joint force in order to meet transregional, multidimensional, and multifunctional threats to U.S. national security. In addition to advanced capabilities and integrating concepts, another critical enabler for a more lethal, flexible, and resilient joint force is greater *jointness*. Jointness, which embodies trust, cooperation, and interdependency, continues to develop across the Armed Forces and has proved to be integral to success on modern battlefields. Today's complex security environment demands truly joint warfighters who are capable, comfortable, and confident when operating across functions, domains, and cultures. A process for acquiring this critical enabler already exists but is largely disregarded. The Department of Defense (DOD) must rediscover the process if it is to succeed in building the levels of trust and interoperability called for in the 2018 National Defense Strategy.¹

The panel on military education led by Congressman Ike Skelton in the late 1980s restructured joint education to overcome Service parochialism that beset past military operations. Reforms under

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the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 sought to advance jointness within the U.S. military, and, since then, many have trumpeted its success in improving the efficacy of the joint force. Of the three phases of joint professional military education (JPME) created by the Skelton Panel, the second phase, JPME II, is unique with its requirement to substantively acculturate military officers to the different Service cultures. The panel decided that among the four directed outcomes of JPME II the most important is the development of "joint attitudes and perspectives."² The panel keenly understood that officers possessing these qualities are imperative to increasing the effectiveness of joint operations. Sustaining and advancing jointness is an ongoing, transformative effort-it is a journey and not an endstate-and the panel's reforms to joint education were the centerpiece of the legislation. The path to greater jointness was well designed within the context of JPME II, and the role of joint acculturation in the process stood front and center. Not only was JPME II expected to prepare officers for their first joint assignment, but it was also designed to inculcate the trust and common understanding essential to jointness.

Three decades after the reforms, however, the understanding and vision established by the panel have faded. The ability to foster greater jointness through JPME II is endangered by those who misunderstand or underappreciate both its principal outcome and preparatory nature. The Chairman's accreditation of programs for the delivery of JPME II has not always considered the true ability of these programs to achieve the mandated outcome: the development of joint attitudes and perspectives through the joint acculturation of students. For reasons of mission, goals, and structure, this outcome is unlikely to be equal across programs, much less assured. And, with historical consistency, a large proportion of officers do not attend JPME II before their initial joint assignments. The failure to prepare officers for joint assignments unnecessarily burdens joint commands with members who rigidly embrace and advocate Service-centric approaches to

joint problems because they were not educated otherwise. Avoiding or forfeiting the opportunity for acculturation and inculcation of jointness before embarking on a joint assignment places officers, their supervisors, and their commands in a needlessly disadvantaged position.

In effect, DOD fails to establish the full range, maturity, and sustainability of jointness it otherwise should. Jointness derives from the integration of different Service cultures and competencies, and it requires teamwork, unfettered by parochialism, among all Services and military departments.3 Jointness exists nowhere if not in the mental realm, which means that jointness is perishable and must be cultivated-continuously. JPME II is the keystone educational experience for cultivating broader and deeper joint attitudes and perspectives within the force. For this reason, DOD must reflect on and recalibrate its approach to joint education and, in particular, JPME II, if it is to enable the joint force to prevail over the priority challenges it faces.

The Importance of Joint Attitudes and Perspectives

The future security environment requires targeted investment in new capabilities and growth in the number of platforms. But genuinely increasing the lethality, flexibility, and resiliency of the joint force depends on investment in people as well. DOD must broaden and deepen jointness in the force beyond what has already been achieved-to develop more officers who are even more *joint-minded* than their predecessors. Such officers value the contributions of the other Services more and trust their members more willingly when working together as a joint team. Only in this way can the joint force reach the level of interdependence required to most effectively employ new capabilities and platforms because jointness remains contingent on how Servicemembers think and feel-it is not merely a collection of capabilities and platforms.

Jointness is nothing if it is not valued by officers belonging to different Service cultures who must be willing to trust each other while collaborating

to accomplish joint military objectives. These characteristics are not easily fostered by the powerful Services as they train, educate, and culturally indoctrinate their members. Most often, Service parochialism and bias are the usual outputs, and this means joint attitudes and perspectives must be cultivated externally. The JPME system develops military officers along three axes: character-ethical and moral leadership; joint acculturation-learning from one's peers; and intellectual development-critical thinking and mental agility.4 Of the axes, joint acculturation is the most critical when the goal is to produce effective joint officers. With the creation of JPME II, the aim of the Skelton Panel was to instill joint attitudes and perspectives in officers headed for joint duty, and to achieve "nothing short of a change in the culture of the officer corps" through a socialization process requiring both time and emphasis.5 This socialization process, or joint acculturation, is what sets JPME II apart from the other phases of joint education-no other phase requires instilling joint attitudes and perspectives in students as the principal outcome.

The Skelton Panel described the creation of joint attitudes and perspectives only in general terms, and existing law and military policy fail to describe or define the process of joint acculturation that makes JPME II unique. But the panel intended for JPME II to be in-residence only, multi-Service in composition, and conducted on neutral, non-Service-centric ground in order to achieve joint acculturation.6 The panel's conditions are crucial because optimal acculturation requires structured, meaningful, and purposeful contact between members belonging to different cultures. Knowledge of the preconditions for achieving acculturation stipulate the educational requirements. In the context of PME, those requirements mean JPME II students must work collaboratively toward a common goal-a condition where they must cooperate for everyone to succeed. It also means that such activity must occur within a culturally neutral venue where student seminars are balanced in Service representation and with minimal

disparity in rank.⁷ Qualitative joint acculturation outcomes for officers of different Services are also governed by a calibrated balance between the intensity of collaboration, the duration of their contact, and the quality of their experience. In this way, Service-centric views and biases are quickly challenged and substantially reduced. As a result, officers can more capably consider joint approaches to military problems and more willingly trust those from different Services during planning and execution.

Better and timelier preparation of joint officers increases the effectiveness and warfighting lethality of the joint force. The Skelton Panel understood this as well and carefully highlighted the preparatory nature of JPME II, implying that such education and socialization would achieve the greatest utility and benefit when received by officers en route to their initial joint assignment.8 In the panel's model, officers liberated from a Service-centric mindset could, as a member of a joint staff, more effectively and productively develop solutions to complex military problems. Joint-mindedness on the part of officers has inarguably become even more important.

As the U.S. military strives to more broadly adopt the philosophy of mission command—operating through empowerment and understanding in a world of multidimensional threats—it must recognize that trust is one of the most important elements.⁹ Affect-based trust is the outgrowth of joint acculturation, and officers must internalize this trust *before* forces and functions are brought together in crisis. Joint education and development must necessarily include preparation and joint acculturation to build joint teams, but DOD has lost sight of that end.

Has the Purpose of JPME II Been Forgotten?

While the earlier reforms to joint education have undoubtedly contributed to an unprecedented level of jointness in the force over the last few decades, DOD is moving away from the two most important aspects of JPME II. In practice and legislation, this phase of joint education, among others, has seen significant modification in the last two decades, and this has given rise to concerns regarding its purpose, timing, and, by extension, its effectiveness.¹⁰

This is because efforts by DOD to expand the number of joint educated officers has led to a proliferation of JPME II-accredited institutions, where most have joint acculturation as a secondary or tertiary objective at best. The most important purpose of this phase of joint education is to instill joint attitudes and perspectives in officers through joint acculturation, but JPME II has now taken on many different forms and meanings. The cumulative result of those past and present efforts to expand joint education is that there are now no less than 13 different JPME II-accredited programs within DOD, and most of the programs exist for purposes and missions far apart from instilling joint attitudes and perspectives. These programs must somehow balance their traditional Service and specialty emphasis with the myriad needs of joint force curricula, while simultaneously trying to instill joint attitudes and perspectives.

Rather than creating a deeper pool of truly joint-minded warriors, efforts to expand JPME II appear to have been driven by pressures either to generate a larger pool of joint-qualified officers from which the Services could promote to flag or general rank or to protect particular programs from the chopping block. The Services wanted JPME II accreditation in order to afford their war college students the opportunity to obtain JPME II credit without necessarily attending a separate course designed around acculturation and specific preparation for a joint assignment. In these decisions, jointness and joint acculturation have taken a back seat.

Each program uses a different approach and intensity to foster joint acculturation. The problem is that there is little demonstration of whether and to what degree these programs are achieving the principle JPME II outcome, much less how their outcomes compare to a program specifically missioned and structured for the purpose of joint acculturation, such as the Joint and Combined Warfighting School in Norfolk, Virginia. The lack of emphasis on joint acculturation was evident when DOD accredited the Service war colleges based on the provision that they could maintain a modicum of representation from the other Services in their student body and faculty.11 Service culture predominance is unavoidable in the Service colleges. The Skelton Panel observed that these institutions would always have a continuing tension between fostering joint acculturation and maintaining their distinct Service cultures.¹² For this reason, the panel insisted that JPME II be taught from a joint perspective and at a culturally neutral location.13 The panel's requirements for genuine acculturation have generally been abandoned over time.

The Process for Accreditation of Joint Education (PAJE) is the means for certifying that all JPME programs fulfill the respective learning areas and objectives prescribed in DOD policy and in statute. Recently, several PAJE accreditation team visits found insufficient emphasis and focus on jointness and, in some cases, a concerning lack of commitment to teaching the fundamentals of joint warfighting. While helping to uphold the legal and intended standards of JPME II, the PAJE identified several programs that lack the requisite emphasis and effort to truly develop joint awareness, perspectives, and attitudes. A large part of this problem lies with the Chairman's Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP), which details the learning areas and objectives for all JPME programs. Not surprisingly, prescribed learning areas and objectives vary substantially across JPME II-accredited programs, of which only two are categorically charged to "cement" joint attitudes and perspectives.14 The lack of focus on acculturation and on the deliberate development of joint perspectives and attitudes, as evidenced in multiple accreditation reviews, illuminates a problem that evolved over time.

The OPMEP also describes seven common educational standards for JPME, the first of which is to "develop joint awareness, perspective and attitudes."¹⁵ This standard does little to



Marines with Black Sea Rotational Force 18.1 advance to their objective during patrolling exercise at Army base Nova Selo Forward Operating Site, Bulgaria, May 10, 2018 (U.S. Marine Corps/Angel D. Travis)

encourage or achieve acculturation, however, because the measures are largely confined to the degree of Service representation among the students (and faculty) in the JPME institutions, along with a broad review of curriculum content.16 In the case of Service war college JPME II programs, the statute allows 60 percent of the students to be from the host Service in a single Service institution focused on the outcomes, competencies, and cultural goals of that Service. The common educational standard does not adequately stress the achievement of true joint acculturation, which is characterized by discernable changes in attitudes and perspectives through a truly joint environment where Service representation among faculty and students is balanced. Too often, at some Service JPME II institutions, the PAJE reveals that acculturation was an afterthought.17

The evidence to demonstrate attainment of acculturation may be difficult to find, but the efforts to achieve true joint acculturation within a variety of approaches are generally unmistakable. The large variance in OPMEP-prescribed learning areas and objectives, compositional imbalances in student and faculty populations, and Service-centricity in curriculum and organizational goals virtually assure disparity in joint acculturation outcomes. Yet the absence of common JPME II requirements and a validated measure of the acculturation outcomes of the various programs restrict the PAJE to only a vague assessment of what a particular program might be doing to foster joint acculturation, and not whether it is in fact achieving success.

No Longer "Right Officer, Right Time"

In addition to overlooking its principle focus of joint acculturation, the value of JPME II to the individual officer is diminished when not received in advance of his or her initial joint assignment. The Skelton Panel discussed the importance of timely joint education when conceiving of its educational reforms; panel members focused both on which Servicemembers and when Servicemembers receive joint education. Ideally, an officer headed for initial joint duty should receive Phase II while en route to that assignment—a circumstance often referred to as "right officer, right time." Much of the defense establishment is, however, dismissive of the preparatory nature of JPME II and the joint acculturation it is intended to provide. Such derision is in part attributable to DOD-sponsored legislative changes that inadvertently weakened the connection between JPME II and joint duty assignments.

For instance, the 2007 National Defense Authorization Act approved a new Joint Qualified Officer (JQO) system under which officers must complete JPME I and II prior to becoming JQOs, but unlike the previous system it no longer requires them to do so prior to serving in a joint duty assignment.¹⁸ The decoupling of JPME II and initial joint duty requirements eased pressures on Service personnel systems and provided convenient options to personnel managers but shortchanged student academic and cultural experiences. Worse, it bolstered beliefs that JPME II is merely a "check in the box" requirement rather than an essential joint educational, socialization, and preparatory experience. Such institutional devaluing occurred because Service personnel managers were allowed to view JPME II only as a qualifier for promotion to general or flag officer. Not surprisingly, within 3 years of this change two prominent studies indicated that many officers serve in joint assignments without adequate educational preparation. One report, sponsored by DOD, observed that it is "the exception instead of the rule that a staff officer gets to attend JPME prior to a combatant command assignment."19 The second report, a congressional study of PME, also found that many officers are sent to joint duty assignments without JPME II and that the practice disregards the fundamental purpose of the education.²⁰ The failure to prepare officers for joint duty means that officers are relegated to learning joint attitudes and perspectives on the job. Such an approach guarantees inconsistency in officer learning and risks reinforcement of, rather than correction to, Servicecentric views and biases. Being the "right officer" means receiving the right education at the "right time," which is before an officer's initial joint assignment. DOD can and must do better.

The proportion of officers receiving JPME II ahead of their initial joint assignment has never been ideal, but disordering the two has become an accepted and endemic practice. This is despite awareness among many within DOD that the learning curve for officers arriving at a combatant command is particularly long and steep-disproportionately so compared to typical Service assignments.²¹ With recent DOD-sponsored legislation reducing the requisite time in a joint assignment to achieve joint duty credit, the imperative for preparatory education becomes even more obvious. The Joint and Combined Warfighting School is the primary means for officers to receive Phase II, yet less than 40 percent of those attending are en route to, or in the first year of, their initial joint assignment. Additionally, many of those attending



Senior Airmen conduct survival training at U.S. Army's Jungle Operations Training Course in Hawaii, March 7, 2017 (U.S. Air National Guard/Christopher S. Muncy)

have already completed their first or second joint tours. These JPME II graduates often lament that they "should have had this education before starting a joint assignment," while also stressing their expanded "understanding of the similarities and differences between Service and interagency cultures" after completing the course.²² Given that many, if not most, officers receive only a single joint assignment during their career, delivering JPME II to them at the end of their tour or afterward is akin to a physician attending medical school only after completing his or her practice.

Here again, the accreditation of the Service war colleges may have aggravated the situation because the Services have historically viewed JPME II in terms of its requirement for promotion to general or flag officer rather than its preparatory value.²³ In this way, it makes more sense for an officer to receive JPME II credit while attending a war college when such a promotion is more likely and proximate. The legislative changes in 2007 also allow Service personnel managers to withhold officers from receiving JPME II until attendance to a senior Service college rather than in advance of a joint assignment. When attendance to a JPME II–accredited senior-level college is not possible, the Services often send these senior officers to the Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC) with the effect of preventing other more junior officers from attending.²⁴

Overlooking the purpose of JPME II and its preparatory nature present considerable obstacles to improving the effectiveness of the joint force. Joint preparation necessitates joint acculturation, and the two must occur simultaneously to achieve the goal of improving the joint force and fulfill the intent of Goldwater-Nichols. Our joint warfighters deserve the investment in jointness, which is an investment in our success.

Fulfilling the Intent of Goldwater-Nichols and the Skelton Panel

The security challenges facing the Nation in the 21st century require its military force to possess an unprec-



Marines with 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, during reconnaissance mission at Onslow Beach, North Carolina, in support of exercise Bold Alligator 14, November 4, 2014 (U.S. Marine Corps/Paul Peterson)

edented level of lethality, flexibility, and resilience. Yet it is difficult to imagine how it might achieve such excellence without deepening and broadening the degree of jointness that presently exists in the joint force. Joint attitudes and perspectives and the interpersonal trust these enable are essential to achieving the highest degree of coordination and comprehensive integration of Service competencies and capabilities during conflict. Indeed, trust is what binds the joint force together, so DOD must return to and refocus on the development of this most important mental aspect of modern joint warfighting.25 The mental aspect of joint development endures as the intent of the reforms to joint education made more than 30 years ago, and it has only become greater and more urgent as the demand for joint effectiveness increases.

While commanding U.S. Joint Forces Command, General Mattis routinely stated that "jointness is not a natural state," meaning that Service parochialism will slowly and ultimately erode any gains in jointness without continuous external pressure driving the Services to be interdependent.26 This external pressure, however, has slowly and steadily ebbed in the last two decades. While most would espouse the importance of jointness and the need for quality joint education to cultivate the attendant attitudes and perspectives, in practice this has not been the case. The accreditation of a multitude of JPME II programs, each with a different mission, structure, and approach, has obscured the principal purpose of JPME II. Without standardization of joint acculturation approaches and objective measurement of acculturation outcomes, accredited institutions are free to make what they want of JPME II. In this regard, it will be difficult (but not impossible) for DOD to establish a common JPME II standard in the OPMEP that all institutions will willingly meet to gain and preserve accreditation. However, it is a necessary endeavor if this phase of joint education is to again achieve the principal purpose envisioned

by the Skelton Panel. At the same time, it must assess the effectiveness of JPME II programs by objectively measuring the joint acculturation outcomes. Without this assessment, it remains unknown whether graduates are substantially more joint-minded as a result of attending Phase II. Currently, the Joint Staff is indeed exploring how it might perform such an assessment across the various accredited JPME II programs, but this effort will require unwavering dedication and considerable time if it is to be successful.

Standardization and assessment of existing JPME II approaches to achieve joint acculturation, to a degree that is prudent and meaningful in the joint operational environment, will take time and resources—it cannot be accomplished quickly or cheaply. DOD must invest in qualitative rather than quantitative outcomes for joint education, and it must be vigilant in guarding against the "diploma mill" approaches to JPME II of which the Skelton Panel warned.²⁷ But if officers continue to receive joint education at the wrong time, there will be a limit to the advancement of jointness and benefit to the joint force, regardless of commonality in approaches and consistency in outcomes.

As flight school is the preparatory education for a pilot to take the controls of an aircraft, JPME II must be widely understood by DOD and the Services as the preparatory education for officers headed to their initial joint assignments. Short of reinstating the legislative requirement for such, DOD must substantially increase the pressure placed on the Services, and their personnel managers, to send officers to JPME II prior to their first joint assignment. This means the Services and joint commands must reconcile who "eats" the time that the officer is away from their duties for this important educational experience that enhances the likelihood for a successful joint assignment. Only in this way will attendance to JPME II be seen as less of a requirement for promotion to general or flag officer and more as a means to improve the effectiveness of the joint force. Through a "right officer, right time" approach, by providing Phase II to officers who actually need it, DOD will achieve not only greater cost-effectiveness in joint education but also greater joint efficacy through officers who can overcome the disproportionately steep learning curve associated with joint duty. Likewise, DOD must correspondingly invest in, rather than *divest from*, the capacity of the JPME II programs to accomplish this goal. Despite long-held concerns that existing JPME II alternatives fall short of the throughput needed to accommodate the number of officers rotating into joint assignments annually, DOD has allowed the capacity to erode. Though JFSC produces more than half of all JPME II graduates, cuts to faculty have diminished its annual throughput by almost 25 percent in recent years.

When the Skelton Panel conceptualized JPME II, its explicit and paramount intent was for the cornerstone for any JPME II program to inculcate greater understanding and appreciation for Service cultures, so that in the minds of students they could trust in their fellow Servicemembers. Congressman Skelton understood the value of joint acculturation in enabling officers to reject "approaches that always favor their own Service" and to inspire "mutual trust and confidence."28 Though the reforms to joint education are now more than three decades old, joint education, and JPME II in particular, has never been more important as it is now for the success of the joint force. It cannot achieve the lethality. flexibility, and resilience sought by the current defense strategy through acquisition of platforms and technical capabilities alone. Indeed, platforms and advanced technologies are not even the most important investments. Rather, DOD must aggressively educate the joint force to cultivate greater and broader intellectual capacity if it is to apply those acquisitions with optimal joint effectiveness. The future of our joint force is at stake. JFQ

Notes

¹ Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 8, available at https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

² House Armed Services Committee, *Report of the Panel on Military Education*, 101st Cong., 1st sess., April 21, 1989, 105, available at <www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/congress/skelton1989/skelton.pdf>.

³ Martin E. Dempsey, *Joint Education White Paper* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, July 16, 2012), 3–4.

⁴ House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades after the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel, April 2010, 167, available at <www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/ u2/a520452.pdf>.

⁵ Report of the Panel on Military Education, 57.

⁶ Ibid., 4, 64, 127.

⁷ Though the report of the Skelton Panel did not explicitly reference social science literature concerning acculturation and attitudinal change, there remains substantive and substantial support in the field for the panel's approach to achieving the desired joint attitudes and perspective. Foremost among this support is the literature on Intergroup Contact Theory and the acculturation research of D.L. Sam and J.W. Berry.

⁸ Report of the Panel on Military Education, 102, 105.

⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3500.01H, *Joint Training Policy for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 2014), A-4.

¹⁰ Another Crossroads? xii.

¹¹ Title 10, U.S. Code § 2155, "Joint Professional Military Education Phase II Program of Instruction," prescribes host Service representation may not exceed 60 percent, with the remaining Services proportionally represented; even in the best case, such programs remain largely Service-centric in terms of students, faculty, curriculum, and surroundings, and the absence of a culturally neutral setting hinders acculturation.

¹² Report of the Panel on Military Education, 97–99.

¹³ Another Crossroads? 65; See also Public Law 101-189, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, § 1122, "Clarification Regarding Schools That Are Joint Professional Military Education Schools for Purposes of Qualification of Officers for Joint Specialty."

¹⁴ CJCSI 1800.01E, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, May 29, 2015), E-H-1.

¹⁵ Ibid., E-1.

16 Ibid., B-2–B-3.

¹⁷ This Process for Accreditation of Joint Education (PAJE) assessment is derived from the authors' participation on multiple accreditation and staff assistance visits as well as selected Joint Staff J7 PAJE reports.

¹⁸ DOD Instruction 1300.19, *DOD Joint Officer Management (JOM) Program* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, March 4, 2014), 16–17; *Another Crossroads*? 22.

¹⁹ The Joint Staff Officer Project, Final Report (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, April 2008), 10.

²⁰ Another Crossroads? xiv.

²¹ The Joint Staff Officer Project, 25.

²² These comments are repeatedly observed in the end-of-course survey responses by students attending the JPME II programs at the Joint Forces Staff College.

²³ Another Crossroads? xii; see also Vincent C. Bowhers, "Manage or Educate: Fulfilling the Purpose of Joint Professional Military Education," Joint Force Quarterly 67 (4th Quarter 2012).

²⁴ The Joint Staff Officer Project, 69.
²⁵ Martin E. Dempsey, Mission Command (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 2012), 6;
see also Les Brownlee and Peter J. Schoomaker, "Serving a Nation at War: A Campaign Quality Army with Joint and Expeditionary Capabili-

ties," *Parameters* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2004), 11.

²⁶ "Command Briefing," U.S. Joint Forces Command, Norfolk, VA, June 2010.

²⁷ Report of the Panel on Military Education, 112.

²⁸ Ibid., 55.