

Defence Report.

Joint Operations and the Evolution of US Joint Doctrine



About the Authors

Scott N. Romaniuk is a PhD Candidate at the School of International Studies, University of Trento (Italy). He is an Associate Researcher with the Center for the Study of Targeted Killing (CSTK) at the University of Massachusetts (Dartmouth) and the Bruno Kessler Foundation (FBK) (Italy). Email: scott.romaniuk@unitn.it.

Tobias Burgers is currently a Doctoral Candidate at the Otto Suhr Institute, Free University Berlin, from which he holds a diploma in political science. His research interests include the impact of cyber and robotic technology on security dynamics, East-Asian security relations, maritime security and the future of conflict. Email: burgers@zedat.fu-berlin.de.

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Introduction

Joint warfare is by no means a product of the past several decades of warfighting experiences. Its roots extend deep into military history and can be traced to the 20th century with either informal or embryonic instances of joint warfare exercised another 200 or so years prior. Expansionistic interest by major colonial power and even the overseas interests of monarchs of the early modern period of history saw instances of cooperative efforts in the military sphere. Joint doctrine captures the essence of operations undertaken by state and agencies jointly, which play a central role in the development of modern warfare. This development has taken place over a period of many decades and indeed centuries, and has made strident moves in its development as a result of major conflicts and campaigns in various parts of the world. Joint doctrine and joint operations share a unique relationship with both reinforcing the fundamental principles and practices of one another. Joint doctrine has developed as a result of the experiences of and lessons drawn from joint operations but also from unilateral operations in conflict and war.¹

Joint operations are informed, at the same time, by the doctrine that results from shared experiences across the differences military services and branches of the US Armed Forces. Doctrine is important to understand as a variable of modern warfare and the security environment. Understanding both friendly and hostile forces and their use of doctrine adds to the analysis of the critical issues. As noted in the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).² *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (hereafter JCS JP-1), “[t]he nature of challenges to the US and its interests demand that the Armed Forces operate as a closely integrated joint team with interagency and multinational partners across the range of military operations.” The following analysis is presented in two parts. First it introduces the idea of joint doctrine. Second, it follows by presenting three empirical cases of how joint doctrine as presented in JCS JP-1 (2013) has evolved.

Joint Doctrine

Joint doctrine is the doctrine informing combined actions of the US Armed Forces. Its purpose is to bring together the operational, tactical, and strategic capabilities of all branches in order for the Armed Forces of the US to operation at an optimal level, through effective and efficient integration, and to account for the “functional and geographic” challenges and “vulnerabilities” of the US (JCS JP-1: i and ii). In order to achieve full potential, the US Armed Forces and its many levels of

leadership are expected to adhere to the doctrine and philosophy of the JCS JP-1 publication.

Adherence to the doctrine is growing in importance due to a rapidly changing security environment of the contemporary period. In the post-9/11 era, the US and its military has faced financial constraints, legal and normative constraints by other states and institutions in the international realm, as well as new adversaries such as violent non-state actors (VSOs), terrorism, insurgents, rogue and failing states, ethnic and nationalist violence, and intra-state violence and conflict negatively impacting international security. Moreover, the US needs to work closely with its existing partners and allies, and make maximum use of its existing strengths through its relationships and membership (i.e., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]), among others. Cross-state and cross-services practices is an essential component of the need to, as JCS JP-1 explains, “diligently study, apply, teach, and ultimately provide insights to improve joint doctrine.”³

Joint operations are however not solely the spectrum of the US armed forces. Other military nations have over recent years, and even decades embraced the concept of joint operations and joint doctrine. China has been an early advocate of joint operations. In their manifesto, *Unrestricted Warfare*, People’s Liberation Army (PLA) colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, argued that if China seeks to engage in conflict with the US, it should deploy all possible assets, with no limitations, on all fronts.⁴ In this, it advocates a strong dependence on joint operations, and can be regarded as something of the unofficial joint doctrine of the PLA, emphasizing asymmetrical approaches to contest the conventional power of the US. This doctrine has been to some extent implemented in the current anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) concept and can be seen as joint doctrine, combining the PLA navy (PLAN) and air force (PLAAN). Likewise, in the South China Sea, China has conducted joint operations, operating units from its navy and air force once more. Interestingly enough, it has conducted joint operations beyond the military branches alone. Regular naval operations in the South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ECS) make use of combined fleets of PLAN as well as the coast guard.

Rather than being understood as policy, JCS JP-1 acts as a bridging mechanism between policy and doctrine, “describing authorized command relationships and authority that military commander’s use and other operational matters derived from Title 10, United States Code (USC).”⁵ One cannot espouse the doctrine laid-out in JP-1 without accepting the central tenets of Karl von Clausewitz who referred to the “interplay of a trinity of forces” with a range of principle actors existing and operating within that trinity – comprised of “the people, the military forces, and the government.”⁶ In major operations of World War II and the Korean War, one can observe instances in which joint doctrine informed the operations of US military forces, leading to successful outcomes in battles and war, as well as failures to strictly adhere to these principles, which also led to failure and defeat for the US and allied forces in certain cases. In this regard, the third offset strategy, as

announced by the US Department of Defense's (DoD) Defense Innovation Initiative in 2014, can be seen as a logical evolution of the joint doctrine concept. The strategy aims through the use of new technologies, such as robotics, big data learning and artificial intelligence (AI) to establish, to enhance not only collaboration among the branches of its military, but at the same time to increase jointness within the private sector, in order to benefit from their expertise.

Development through Practice

The principles of war (Objective, Offensive, Mass, Economy of Force, Maneuver, Unity of Command, Security, Surprise, and Simplicity) outlined in JCS JP-1 were applied and led to successful outcomes.⁷ In effect, they have become the institutionalized prerequisites for success in missions in the world. These principles are also applied to all levels of warfare, which share an intricate relationship with one another, overlapping among the Tactical, Operations, and Strategic levels, and feeding into the areas of National Policy, Theater Strategy, Campaigns, Major Campaigns, Battles, Engagements, and Small Unit and Crew Actions.⁸ This progression from macro- to micro-levels requires the application of doctrine for each level to achieve success. Joint doctrine has progressed and developed over a long period of time, through trial and error, and from major operations and campaign, to crisis response and limited contingency operations, to military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence.⁹

The American Civil War

Early operations, like those observed during the American Civil War, illustrated the effectiveness of joint operations and provided strong lessons for the failure of a joint strategic vision or doctrine.¹⁰ After war erupted in the US, no strategic vision for reuniting the Union could be found. The Union was devoid of experience and leadership with experience in leading large masses of soldiers and equipment, and there was close to no coordination between the various services of the US. The Civil War and specifically the Battle of Vicksburg provides a fruitful example for understanding the evolution of US joint doctrine.

General Ulysses S. Grant's replacement of General Henry W. Halleck proved a beginning point for strong leadership in the absence of strategic leadership from Washington about the direction of the war effort against the Confederacy.¹¹ Naval operations under Admiral David D. Porter became essential to Grant's coordinated plans.¹² Naval and civilian efforts were incorporated in land movements. Shipping was supervised by high level leadership and the efforts of planners to realize the importance of surprise, darkness, and the concentration of forces in the form of flotillas, armies, and coordinated cavalry attacks provided the backdrop of a sound victory for the Union.

Grant strived to ensure his role as leader was maintained. He understood the necessity of adhering to a strong and well thought-out plan, and not to dilute it and confuse that with different sets of goals that competed with one another.¹³ Between the beginning of the Civil War and the end a drastic change had taken place regarding the massing of forces, concentration of attacks, the importance of supply, the integration of the civil sector to support the military, and the coordination of military services.

Operation TORCH in World War II

In World War II, Operation TORCH, the Allied invasion of Vichy-controlled French North Africa, represented all of the principles of warfare. It was not only a joint operation but also an operation projecting joint power.¹⁴ The dangerous operation required the concentration of forces in an offensive with clearly defined objectives, a unity of command, the element of surprise and was much simpler operation than that of its D-Day counterpart. The operation was part of an evolutionary process of joint doctrine and was also possible from the development of amphibious doctrine and warfare over the previous years.¹⁵ It was in this regard a critical expression of naval power in support of much broader land-based strategy.

Where previous smaller operations of this type were recorded at Dieppe and the Commando raids against positions in Norway, TORCH tested the theories of amphibious and joint operations with thousands of ships and around 100,000 soldiers.¹⁶ On the unique scale of the operation and the incorporation of novel aspects of resistance and challenge, O'Hara writes, “[i]n November 1942 many of the tools and techniques of amphibious warfare were in place. Practice was another matter. Most opposed landings had fared poorly. Experience indicated that failure was more likely than success. The two most successful large-scale landings – Diego Suarez and Guadalcanal – met no resistance at the crucial points and had not needed significant naval gunfire or aerial power. Moreover, the questionable practices, such as sending loaded ships into defended harbors, appeared to have been validated.”¹⁷

Close cooperation between two main branches: the Army and the Navy. Both were supported by air power – a critical factor in gaining a toehold in enemy-controlled territory. This interaction was a major development because it took place in a period when cooperation of this nature was not common. The operation laid the groundwork for understanding joint operations and coordinated efforts at power projection for subsequent decades. An interesting aspect in regards to the use of air power (see JCS JP-3-0) was the transition element. Initially the Navy controlled the air assets but “provisions were made to rapidly transition the preponderance of air operations to land-based Army air power.”¹⁸

Operation TORCH was the first Anglo-American land, sea, and air offensive of World War II and was the first Army-Navy amphibious operation to have taken place since the Spanish-American War.¹⁹ Moreover, the operation was a forcible entry, which is one of the most difficult types of joint operations. Tenets of forcible entry operations can be applied to similar operation such as interdiction, as part of a much larger and more complex mission.²⁰ It was an ideal testing ground for future combined operations against Sicily, the Italian mainland, France, and elsewhere in Western Europe during World War II. The operation was an instrument of informing operations halfway around the world in the Pacific theater of operations against the Japanese.²¹ Indeed, one of the most spectacular instances of US joint operations was observed throughout the Pacific. Murray writes:

US joint operations reached their high point in the Pacific. The tyranny of distance meant that the services had to work together to project military power. In the Southwest Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur advanced up the coastline of New Guinea with the superb support of Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces under General George Kenney as well as naval components. By conducting joint operations, MacArthur kept the Japanese permanently off guard. Similarly, after the losses at Tarawa alerted Admiral Chester Nimitz and his commanders to the problems of opposed landings, the Central Pacific island-hopping campaign emerged as one of the most impressive operational-level campaigns of the war, especially the cooperation displayed by soldiers, sailors, and marines. The result was seizure of bases in spring 1944 which Army Air Force strategic bombers used for their attacks against the Japanese homeland.²²

Final praise of Operation Torch centers on not only the methods of coordination,²³ as now found within JCS JP-1, but also the principle of the Joint Force Commander, Service Component Commander, and their individual and combined responsibilities for the exercise of discipline and authority vital to joint operations.²⁴ These aspects took place within a well-developed alliance – a coalition of states dedicated to a specific political and military cause, and that entailed strategic planning, coordination, and calculation (Sherwood-Randall, 2006; JCS JP-3-0, 2011).²⁵ This context would also prove crucial to understanding joint doctrine decades later following the Cold War and the 9/11 attacks against the US.

The Korean War

Operation Chromite (the Inchon invasion), a few points can be made about the evolution of joint doctrine and operations, and what it teaches students of military studies and military leaders today. Operation Chromite illustrated the importance of military and political experience in leading joint operations and fostering the essence of joint doctrine. Strong leadership is necessary for proper conceptualization, planning, and execution of joint operations.²⁶ General Douglas MacArthur's character and actions also demonstrate the dangers of personality in

joint doctrine and a friction that can exist between rules and personalities in high command. One, despite his or her diverse experience and achievements, can attempt to replace doctrinal conduct with ego and self-indulgence, but in doing so, history presents many examples of tactical, operations, and strategic breakdown that can occur.

The command structure used by MacArthur was adopted from that employed during the Pacific campaign during World War II. He emphasized strategic surprise, naval and air supremacy, not mere power, in an attempt to compensate for the challenges posed by the environment and the enemy, and strong leadership with a focus on objectives from high command to the smallest units of operation.²⁷ Moreover, an intricate focus on contingency, assessments, and in the absence of congruency with the upper echelons of command, MacArthur (specifically in the context of the Inchon invasion) exemplified an acute ability to communicate the value of his assumptions and application of his ideas to the modern warfare and its development.²⁸

Many military operations and campaigns throughout US history provide a constructive backdrop for understanding the needs and changes that may come about in future wars. They also point to the distinctiveness of joint warfare. The many changes that have taken place in the contemporary security environment also signal a number of implications for the future. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is used here as a basis for assessing some of those, however, it should be noted many of the US' previous military engagements continue to provide learning opportunities for the importance of joint warfare, joint doctrine, and joint warfighting now and in the future.

Operation Enduring Freedom

OEF takes place in the context of the 9/11 attacks against the US. The administration of President George W. Bush was to pursue those responsible. This provides an important initial factor of significance in that the importance of objectives cannot be overstated in joint warfare. Depending on the perspective taken, OEF retained its own strategic, operational, and tactical objectives, but was dislocated from the much larger strategic objectives of the "War on Terror" (WoT) in which it was situated. Moreover, the US acted unilaterally in some of its follow-on operations such as Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) – though it managed to string together its own coalition, Washington failed to win the hearts and minds of many populations to fight OIF, among other conflicts.

Within the framework of OEF, however, the US operated under UN authorization, and led a large coalition of state militaries, and public and private agencies, all of which understood the situation as something more than a mere military campaign. OEF, in this regard, points to the need to look to the future of military engagements as efforts of humanitarian assistance given the civilian elements that will always be

present, the necessity of peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and peace enforcements, as a result of the inter-ethnic relations inherent in many battles, conflicts, and war. Finally, when combat ends; peace does not emerge out of nowhere. The idea of peace through development must resonate in the minds of military planners, and military doctrine of all states because ensuring lasting peace through development could mean averting conflict in the future.

Criticality of the air component for any military and development mission is probably the most acute lesson to be extracted from OEF. Without a strong, reliable, well-managed and coordinated air element, the concept of joint warfare becomes fragmented. Central Command Air Forces (CENTAF) – embedded within US Central Command (CENTCOM) – was located in Saudi Arabia, and due to its location, permission was required from the Saudi government. Its position was partly political, building trust and unity among vital partners in the WoT. Combined Force Air Component Commander (CFACC) General Wald saw precision-guided munitions as a key factor in the reduction of casualties in joint warfare campaign. Such a reduction will become even more important in future wars because of the growing intolerance of human loss, particularly civilians, and the need to build trust and support among population for forces to enter into conflict zones with the aim of achieving peace and stability.

OEF demonstrates the ability to augment force strength and therefore force effectiveness through partnerships and coalition efforts. First, it allows states to apply greater firepower through increased numbers operating in coordinated fashion. Second, it allows states to share technologies and sophisticated weaponry. Third, no single actor is stronger alone. Support needs cannot always be anticipated and having a well-organized and motivated network or coalition can mean the difference between success and failure on the battlefield and well-organized campaigns. During OEF, the US also relied on coordinated attacks against Taliban positions and those of al-Qaeda (AQ). Beyond the US, regional actors and the Northern Alliance enjoyed immense assistance by Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) in the face of terrorist and insurgent activity within and across Afghanistan. Beyond Afghanistan, the same support can be offered to actors on the ground in remote locations.

Air power was combined with coalition intelligence and information sharing – another major factor of joint warfare now and in the future. The world is comprised of a network of states and actors, each of which are able to offer unique and vital pieces of information to one another to ensure strategic, operational, and tactical success through a campaign. As Captain Gregory Ball states, “[i]n an effort to wipe out the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, coalition forces attacked the Tora Bora region in Eastern Afghanistan, where coalition intelligence believed Taliban and al-Qaeda leadership, including Osama Bin Laden, had sought refuge.”²⁹ Moreover, Lambeth refers to the use of Special Operations Forces (SOF) in combination with air power:

The successful insertion of a small number of US SOF teams into Afghanistan after 11 days of bombing signalled the onset of a new use of air power in joint warfare, in which Air Force terminal attack controllers working with SOF spotters positioned forward within line of sight of enemy force concentrations directed precision air attacks against enemy ground troops who were not in direct contact with friendly forces.³⁰

When considering the effectiveness of intelligence and air power during OEF, one should expect OEF to serve as a template for future joint warfare success for decades to come. Inter-service operability was a resounding success during OEF and understanding each services roles and responsibilities helped to ensure success. The combined efforts in air operations were part-and-parcel to securing the necessary supplies, field, equipment, and men and women critical to a military achievement that would ultimately translate into safer and more secure country with a democratic government. As Lambeth explains, “[u]nits from different services with little or no prior joint warfighting experience performed under fire as though they had trained and operated together for years. In the aggregate, Enduring Freedom was uniquely emblematic of the quality and resourcefulness of today’s American military personnel.”³¹

The new security environment requires multilateral action, networking, and the integration of services within and across states in order to project optimal power toward the enemy and toward achieving objectives. The future of joint warfare, as indicated by OEF, is more than defeating an enemy in a particularly position. Understanding how to work together, what to expect of one another, and where each other’s strengths and weaknesses lie is vital and will continue to prove so. Adherence to principles of war and joint doctrine is also essential for avoiding the costly (in human and material terms) mistakes as experienced during Operation ANACONDA.³² Tripp, Lynch, Drew, and Chan argued the importance of recognizing the need to adhere to doctrine:

The organizational command structure of OEF combat support differed from the structure delineated in doctrine. As roles and responsibilities developed on an ad hoc basis, this difference led to several difficulties, and some organizations were not prepared for the evolving responsibilities. The global nature of OEF and other ongoing operations further complicated the command structure.³³

Operation Anaconda proved that neglect of doctrine and ignorance of lessons learned and rules put in place can have significantly negative effects to a mission and its personnel.

Given the breadth of the global security environment, the future of joint warfare, as informed by OEF, will require a calculus that affords special attention to avoiding strategic overstretch. Again, the multilateral aspect of the warfighting experience

demonstrates that overstretch can be avoided if partners indeed work together and synchronize their aims and methods. Moreover, military doctrines need to be compatible so that military services across states are speaking the same language of doctrine. This ultimately translates into a more agile and capable force, combined with technological innovation can reach further into insecure zones where the threats of the 21st century may be found.

Conclusion: Looking Ahead

Joint Operations have been evolving over a long period and its development has been pierced continuously with decisions, cultures, and personalities that inherently compete with the core values and principles of jointness in and across military services. One of those challenges is raised by the existence of cultures within different services branches that comprise the military as a single and coherent unit. Oftentimes development in joint warfighting has come at high costs on the battlefield and lessons learned as a result of either competing service cultures, decision-making that sways from the principles of warfare and joint doctrine, as well as and as a result of, in some cases of the previous point, personalities that contrast with the roles in which individuals have been placed. Deviating from doctrine has proven costly in the past. We saw the effects of failing to follow now only joint doctrine in instances during Operation Enduring Freedom but also the principles of warfare. Operation Anaconda illustrates the ramifications of poor decision-making and the failure of following what has been outlined in detail in the various joint publications³⁴.

The US continues to overlook, despite its long and rich experiences in the field of joint operations and joint warfare, the necessity of deepening service personnel and officers connection and intrinsic understanding of what it means to operate jointly and in the joint environment. Some of the problem associated with this oversight is the distance that has come between the contemporary military service branches of the US and the historical record and lessons learned. Sometimes, overshadowed by subsequent successes, past failures and the surfeit of lessons that can be extracted from those previous missions and campaigns continue to be overlooked and often forgotten. Another reaction is the justification of failures because they were soon compensated for by victories that were made possible by chance or factors loosely associated with the tenets of doctrine and command.

Officers placed in command of services forces can act as obstructions to their own forces development, irrespective of the level of force in questions. When taken together, the many different constituent forces of a larger military structure and intellectuality, can prevent it from developing the necessary flexibility and mindfulness of functioning in a joint world with real and pervasive joint education and perspectives. “The Joint Staff, which supports the Chairman and Secretary of

Defense,” writes Murray is also partially responsible for joint concept development.³⁵ But it is so consumed by day-to-day actions that long-range (beyond the in-box) thinking is almost impossible,” thereby establishing from the highest point of command a cultural precedent inhibiting the sort of tradition that needs to be recast in the contemporary services of the US that constitute its hard power capabilities in a rapidly changing security environment.

¹ US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations*. Arlington, VA: US Department of Defense, 2011. <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf>.

² US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. Arlington, VA: US Department of Defense, 2013: i. <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf>.

³ US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. Arlington, VA: US Department of Defense, 2013: ii. <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf>.

⁴ Liang, Q. & Xiangsui, W. (1999). *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America*. Panama City, Panama: Pan American Publishing. <<http://www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf>>.

⁵ US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. Arlington, VA: US Department of Defense, 2013: I-1. <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I-3.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, I-7.

⁹ US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. Arlington, VA: US Department of Defense, 2013: I-14. <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf>.

¹⁰ US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) “Joint Military Operations Historical Collection” (JMOHC), 1997: I-1. <<http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/doctrine/history/hist.pdf>>.

¹¹ *ibid.*, I-4.

¹² *ibid.*, I-2.

¹³ *ibid.*, I-10.

¹⁴ Gordon, IV, J. “Joint Power Projection: Operation Torch,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, (1994): 60-9. <<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA528962>>.

¹⁵ O'Hara, V. P. *Torch: North Africa and the Allied Path to Victory*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015: 20. <<http://www.usni.org/store/books/history/torch>>.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 29; see Steele, R. W. “Political Aspects of American Military Planning, 1941-1942,” *Military Affairs*, 35(2) (1971): 68-74.

¹⁷ O'Hara, V. P. *Torch: North Africa and the Allied Path to Victory*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015: 29. <<http://www.usni.org/store/books/history/torch>>.

¹⁸ Gordon, IV, J. “Joint Power Projection: Operation Torch,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 1994: 60; Murray, W. “Triumph of Operation Torch,” *World War II*, 17 (2002): 44-50. <<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA528962>>.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 61.

²⁰ US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations*. Arlington, VA: US Department of Defense, 2011: III-25. <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf>.

²¹ Holzimmer, K. C. “Joint Operations in the Southwest Pacific, 1943-1945,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 38 (2005): 100-8. <<http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy1.apus.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?>>.

²² Murray, W. “The Evolution of Joint Warfare” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 31 (2002): 34-5.

²³ *Ibid.* <<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a426537.pdf>>.

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