



## **A Practitioner's Handbook for Interagency Leadership**

**William J. Davis**

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There is a strong need for a work like *A Practitioner's Handbook for Interagency Leadership*. This pocket-sized but thought-provoking primer summarizes years of hard-won experience wrestling with the broad challenges leaders face in the complex interagency environment. Reading it will go a long way toward preparing leaders to transition from the familiar routines of their home organizations to an environment where there are “few hierarchies, rules, or standard operating procedures.”

The authors are all seasoned veterans of the joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational (JIIM) environment. The book logically progresses through levels of individual and organizational friction that can emerge to hinder interagency operations. Throughout the book, there is a consistent theme of the importance of self-awareness, both personally and organizationally, of the sources of social identity dynamics that can impede and even undermine JIIM operations. The advice offered is deceptively simple. For example, it is no surprise to read that agencies have overlapping responsibilities and authorities that spur competition and divide their members. It is equally unsurprising to read that different organizations do not easily change the way they are used to operating to accommodate other partners. However, to paraphrase Clausewitz; even though war may be simple, in war the simplest things are extraordinarily difficult. Adding interagency to the mix can only make things more difficult. And if the solutions and best practices are so obvious, then why do we continue to struggle with interagency cooperation? Clearly, there are lessons here that must be reflected upon lest they be forgotten when they are most needed.

If there is any weakness in the book, it is that the bulk of it is focused on the “J” in JIIM. At 94 pages this is an intentionally short handbook, designed to be carried around and used, but pages 43-86 alone deal solely with the military services and joint operations. Arguably “J” is the facet most relevant to a military audience, but it is probably also the easiest one to address. One is left wishing there was more on the “IIM” players, especially in light of FM 3-0 and the looming criticality of “IIM” concerns during “consolidation of gains.” Nevertheless, this is a useful introduction to leading in the JIIM environment, and underscores the pressing need for additional studies that are as practical as they are thoughtful.

Much has been invested over the past several decades toward promoting interagency cooperation and a whole of government approach. There are many healthy JIIM relationships, painstakingly

built, that must not be allowed to slip from cooperation to competition. The Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation, by its publication of *A Practitioner's Handbook for Interagency Leadership*, has made another valuable contribution toward preserving those relationships. **IAJ**

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