

### Interagency Reform

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After many years of in-depth studies and comprehensive proposals on how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the interagency, the time has come to pass legislation that would direct significant interagency reform in an effort to effectively organize the U.S. government for national security. The model for such reform is found in the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols (G-N) Act which led to significant improvements in an organization that had suffered from poor coordination, communication, and execution of joint operations undertaken in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Similar legislation is necessary to reform various government agencies as was the case with G-N and the military services. It is widely accepted that without that legislation, the military, especially the Navy and Marine Corps, would not have carried out the reforms. Likewise, many experts believe that reforms to the interagency can be carried out only by firm legislation.

The call for needed interagency integration dates back at least as far as the immediate aftermath of World War II when some federal officials raised the issue of starting a form of interagency cadre career development program (Dale, CRS, p.3, July 8, 2008). Fifty years later the National Defense Panel recommended the establishment of an interagency cadre based on a long-term, comprehensive career development plan. This idea was included in the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), which recommended that interagency professionals should gain “joint” experience similar to that prescribed for military officers in the Goldwater-Nichols Act (Dale, CRS, p.3, July 8, 2008).

Similar recommendations on developing National Security Professionals (NSPs) were made again in 2001 by the Hart-Rudman Commission. Finally in 2007, President Bush signed an executive order launching the National Security Professional Development (NSPD) program in order to develop interagency NSPs (Dale, CRS, p. 2, July 8, 2008).

While this latest effort to improve the effectiveness of the interagency includes a national strategy, an organizational structure, and a pilot educational program, it received little attention on the Hill until 2008. As a result of a growing consensus between national security professionals and scholars from across the political spectrum, several congressional committees began a more earnest study of this proposed reform. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Armed Services Committee, in particular, held hearings and sponsored projects focused on interagency reform, including proposals for facilitating increased integration among federal agencies (Dale, CRS, p.1, July 8, 2008).

There are a number of key reforms necessary to make this daunting task a reality. These reforms will actually make our nation better able to deter, detect, defeat, and respond to threats to our security, no matter where they come from or what form they may take. Our leaders should not dismiss this with a shrug: “Well, this is too hard and G-N only dealt with the military, not multiple agencies with competing interests”. While nobody would deny the degree of difficulty that this effort requires, the reality is that our nation deserves our very best effort to improve our government, to strengthen its ability to govern, and to fulfill its commitment to serve and protect its citizens and our way of life. The following five recommendations are critical to an effective reform of the interagency and overall improvement of U.S. national security. It is important to understand that these aren’t brand new ideas. The five recommendations listed below have been widely circulated by various government agencies and think tanks. The reality is that these are just a handful of ideas that have been discussed and written about over the past several years. This proposal seeks to focus our national leadership on areas that would give the interagency a chance at significant reform and improved overall national security.

Solidify the efforts made by the Bush Administration to develop a NSP program that is designed to produce individuals that possess the skills and experience to operate effectively and efficiently across the interagency environment. While the 2007 executive order was certainly a step in the right direction, this initiative needs specific mention in legislation as well as oversight to ensure compliance. As was pointed out during our visit to the Homeland Security Council (HSC), a budget devoted to the NSP program would signify a true commitment to systemic improvements to the interagency and national security. The professional education and joint assignment requirements laid out in G-N provide an excellent model for developing effective interagency leaders. The stark reality is that without specific education and joint assignment guidelines, without requirements and incentives spelled out in legislation, this effort will languish in the hands of agency directors who may or may not believe in the program’s potential. A well-designed and professionally delivered NSP program provides what is probably the most critical and likely vehicle of interagency reform out of all proposals in the mix of discussions amongst national security practitioners and scholars alike.

Combine the Homeland Security Council and the National Security Council into an organization with one staff. Merging these two staffs would ensure that securing the homeland gets the attention it deserves from the executive branch and will help develop comprehensive strategies and policies necessary to guide our efforts towards overall improved national security. The separation of these two entities has only impeded progress and efficiencies only recently realized in response to natural disasters and improved preparations for manmade disasters. This merger will improve communication and coordination of resources and assets necessary to give homeland security the kind of attention that is given to OCONUS threats.

Clarify the role that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has in taking the lead in responding to catastrophic events, but also ensure that the Department of Defense (DoD) understands it is expected to play a significant role whenever needed. Posse Comitatus is still relevant; it prevents the federal government from running roughshod

over local and state authorities and getting into legal jams. But the days of DoD giving a stiff arm to civil support are over. Having said that, we see positive signs that proper preparations are being undertaken to ensure a “lean forward” approach that facilitates federal responses to both natural and manmade disasters. This has been recently demonstrated in the improved performance of local, state, and federal authorities in their evacuation efforts during the recent hurricane season that impacted the Gulf Coast of Texas, along with the first iteration of the CBRNE Consequence Management Response Force (CCMRF) mission recently undertaken by three BCT-sized elements from the active component of the U.S. Army. The improvements to the hurricane response are due in part to 2006 legislation that gave teeth to the stated reforms and provided sufficient appropriations to cover the expense of a completely revamped communication system, thereby fixing one of the critical problems in the Hurricane Katrina response by all levels of government.

Create a comprehensive national security review patterned after the DoD QDR process. A national security review would provide the federal government with an integrated set of national security priorities and assign the roles and responsibilities associated with these priorities across the interagency. This review could productively interface with the upcoming QDR, thereby offering President-elect Obama and his staff with security assessments from across the whole of government.

Create a strategic planning group led by a director within the newly consolidated National Security Council (NSC); this group would conduct strategic planning efforts and provide oversight of their implementation. This group would craft the kind of integrated, comprehensive strategy needed to deal effectively with a constantly changing, complex global environment. This strategic planning directorate should be patterned after the NSC Planning Board and Operations Group established and effectively used by President Eisenhower. The strategic planning directorate would assume full responsibility for the national security review and national security planning guidance. To find the most qualified director, the president should nominate this individual and the senate should confirm the nominee. Thus the appointment would receive national attention, and would prevent the installation of a political appointee.

The U.S. has a tremendous opportunity to substantially reform the interagency and effectively organize the federal government to provide national security in a complex and rapidly changing global environment. Private think tanks, the Congressional Research Service (CRS), and members of Congress have conducted in depth studies of various departments of the federal government and their associated elements of national power. Over the past several years, these worthwhile efforts have produced a myriad of useful observations, lessons learned, and informed recommendations that make it feasible for Congress to begin hearings that will identify necessary reforms. The resulting legislation should fully specify these reforms, set priorities and oversight responsibilities to ensure compliance, and require feedback on the effectiveness of the system. A growing consensus among national security practitioners supports this reform. With a new administration recently taking over, this is an ideal time to push this initiative forward and set the stage for more effective and comprehensive national security for decades to

come. The executive and legislative branches must manage expectations across the interagency and communicate the reality that this is a comprehensive effort that will require patience and discipline in its successful execution.

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