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Directions for Defense

Roles and Missions Commission of the Armed Forces Report to Congress, the secretary of defense, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff May 24, 1995

Executive Summary

The central purpose of the Department of Defense is to conduct effective military operations in pursuit of America's National Security Strategy. The central message for DoD from the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces is, in the 21st century, every DoD element must focus on supporting the operations of the unified commanders in chief. Everything else DoD does, from furnishing health care to developing new weapons, should support that effort. The recommendations made throughout our report seek to concentrate all of DoD's activities toward that end.

In establishing the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, Congress told us to "review ... the appropriateness ... of the current allocations of roles, missions, and functions among the armed forces; evaluate and report on alternative allocations; and make recommendations for changes in the current definition and distribution of those roles, missions, and functions." (National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994, Public Law 103-160, Nov. 30, 1993, as amended.)

Our view of the future gives urgency to this effort. If America's experience since the end of the Cold War is instructive, America's future will be marked by rapid change, diverse contingencies, limited budgets and a broad range of missions to support evolving national security policies. Providing military capabilities that operate effectively together to meet future challenges is the common purpose of the military departments, the services, the defense agencies and other DoD elements. All must focus on DoD's real product -- effective military operations.

Military operations are performed by geographic and functional CinCs under the authority and direction of the president and the secretary of defense. To be successful, the CinCs must mold effective unified forces from the diverse array of capabilities provided to them by other organizations. This means that the CinCs must have a role in helping determine the capabilities that will be available; it also requires the close cooperation of the military departments and the services, support agencies and decision-makers in DoD. The department has strengthened its capabilities for unified operations considerably since passage of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols [Department of] Defense Reorganization Act. But that job is not yet done; further efforts to ensure the effectiveness of joint operations are essential to a successful and secure future.

Our recommendations are designed to better focus DoD's traditional military functions, management and decision-making processes, and support elements more directly on effective unified military operations. In short, we must accelerate the process of thinking differently about defense. Military operations are planned and conducted by joint forces under the direction of the CinCs, not by the military services, defense agencies or Pentagon staffs.

We began our inquiry by listing the global realities we expect to be prominent through the first two decades of the next century. We anticipate the continuation of regional threats and instabilities; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; demand for military operations focusing on preventing conflict, promoting stability and expanding U.S. influence; greater importance of information warfare; limited defense budgets; and rapid technological advances.

To deal with these realities, we identified six attributes of a successful DoD in the future. They are responsiveness to requirements that change over time -- sometimes rapidly; reliability in delivering predictable, consistent performance; cooperation and trust, the sine qua non of unified operations; innovation in new weapons, organization and operational concepts; competition directed toward constructive solutions to complex problems; and

efficiency in the use of resources.

Our recommendations encourage the development of these attributes. They are designed to improve the ability of the secretary of defense to provide unified strategic and programmatic direction to DoD; expand the role of the chairman and vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CinCs in ensuring better joint doctrine, training, weapons planning and support; focus the military departments on providing the right mix of capabilities for unified military operations; improve capabilities to deal with new challenges of the post-Cold War world; and reduce the cost of the support infrastructure through increased outsourcing and better management -- while increasing responsiveness to the needs of the CinCs.

In the context of effective, unified military operations, our most surprising conclusion is that it is a mistake to take the traditional view of roles and missions issues -- a view that concentrates on the allocation of roles among the military services. Broadly speaking, existing problems with service roles are symptoms of the need for DoD to concentrate more intensely on unified operations. That is, do the CinCs have the set of capabilities they need to fulfill their missions?

We group our recommendations under three broad themes: the unified military operations themselves, productive and responsive support, and improved management and direction.

Our recommendations emphasize the roles of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CinCs' joint "core competency" in preparing for and conducting unified operations.

We recommend that the chairman of the JCS propose to the secretary of defense a unified vision for joint operations to guide force and materiel development; integrate support to CinCs in such critical areas as theater air/missile defense and intelligence; improve joint doctrine development; develop and monitor joint readiness standards; and increase emphasis on joint training. We recommend larger roles for the CinCs in structuring and controlling command, control and intelligence support; joint training; and theater logistics. We also emphasize the role of the geographic CinCs in preparing for coalition operations.

We recommend a new, functional unified command responsible for joint training and integration of all forces based in the continental United States. Under the direction of the secretary of defense, this new command would train and provide the joint forces required by the geographic CinCs' operational plans. The command would work with the geographic CinCs in developing appropriate plans and training programs for joint and combined operations.

Our examination revealed several emerging mission areas that demand immediate attention from the federal government generally, not just from DoD. These mission areas will provide significant security challenges and opportunities in the years ahead.

Combating Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. We recommend that the vice president lead an interagency task force to better organize U.S. defense against these insidious threats. We also recommend organizational changes in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, and better integration of the functional unified commands into overall planning for combating WMD.

Information Warfare. We recommend a high-level interagency effort to improve America's information warfare capacity. DoD's capabilities for this emerging war-fighting mission need to be improved, and U.S. civil and military information vulnerabilities must be reduced.

Peace Operations. Currently, DoD regards peace operations as a subset of the broad category of operations other than war. However, peace operations hold the prospect for preventing, containing or ending conflict. They have the potential to preclude larger, more costly U.S. involvement in regional conflicts. We recommend differentiating peace operations to give them greater prominence in contingency planning.

OOTW. In addition, we must be prepared to engage in the wide range of remaining OOTW tasks, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. For these, we recommend limiting the use of military forces to military tasks where practical; broadening nonDoD capabilities for some OOTW functions; and improving interagency coordination. We must also ensure rapid reimbursement of DoD for unplanned peace operations and OOTW to prevent readiness problems among forces not engaged.

For all the missions highlighted above, DoD must expand capabilities but without sacrificing its ability to fight the nation's wars. DoD also must maintain a hedge against the possibility that another country could attain sufficient military capabilities to threaten our nation.

The military departments should sharpen their focus on their particular capabilities (i.e., core competencies). While the CinCs concentrate on planning and training for joint operations in the near term, the military departments must have a larger view that embraces long-term force development and materiel acquisition.

Overseas presence is a core competency of all the services. Each service has important, sometimes unique capabilities for presence. Current practices

should be challenged to find innovative ways of meeting those objectives, such as intermittent or surge deployments and various combinations of forces.

Additionally, we recommend specific adjustments in some service functions: Make the Air Force the executive agent for combat search and rescue. Assign the management of sea-based pre-positioning programs to the Marine Corps and management of land-based pre-positioning programs to the Army. Have the Army provide ground-based area air defense, heavy engineering and supplemental logistics support to the Marine Corps. Assign the Air Force primary responsibility for acquiring and operating multiuser space systems. Transfer operational support airlift aircraft (except for Department of the Navy C-9s) to the Air Force for management by the U.S. Transportation Command.

Congress asked us to examine the reserve components' roles and missions in DoD's future total force. Our recommendation is to size and shape reserve components more consistently with national strategy needs, integrate the reserve forces better with the active duty forces, improve training and evaluation, and eliminate reserves not needed.

From our review of the deep attack mission, we conclude that DoD needs a better mechanism for determining the proper size and mix of deep attack capabilities in the requirements development process. We recommend a DoD-wide study to determine the best mix of these systems for the future. Furthermore, we recommend including bombers in that study and delaying a final decision on B-2 bomber funding until the industrial base portion of DoD's bomber study is completed and reviewed thoroughly.

Our study identifies three perceived roles and missions problems that proved to be nonissues. In each case, improvement is needed, but not a reordering of roles or functions. Putting outdated roles and missions issues such as these into proper perspective -- and, therefore, to rest -- is an essential step toward concentrating attention on the broader changes needed.

In particular, Army and Marine Corps capabilities are complementary, not redundant; inefficiencies attributed to the so-called "four air forces" (i.e., each service has aircraft) are found mostly in the infrastructure, not on the battlefield; and more joint training, not fewer services, is needed to ensure effective close air support.

DoD should reduce the cost of support to help fund higher priority needs. Infrastructure accounts for more than half of its budget; big opportunities for savings are available within that infrastructure.

Our approach is to outsource activities that need not be performed in the government and re-engineer support activities that must remain in the government to protect the public interest. Implementation of some of our recommendations will require legislative relief from laws that inhibit efficiency.

More than a quarter of a million DoD employees engage in commercial-type activities that could be performed by competitively selected private companies. Experience suggests achievable cost reductions of about 20 percent. DoD should outsource essentially all wholesale-level warehousing and distribution, wholesale-level weapon system depot maintenance, property control and disposal, and incurred-cost auditing of DoD contracts. In addition, many other commercial-type activities, including those in family housing, base and facility maintenance, data processing and others, could be transferred to the private sector. Finally, DoD should rely on the private sector for all new support activities.

Giving beneficiaries of DoD health care more choice between military and civilian care at equal cost may reduce long-term demand for peacetime military medical personnel and facilities. The resulting reductions would yield net savings and sharpen the military medical establishment's focus on readiness to meet operational requirements.

Support activities that remain in the government should be re-engineered to improve performance and reduce cost, and they should adopt private-sector management tools that increase efficiency.

We rejected a monolithic new acquisition organization independent of the services because it could undermine core combat capabilities. Instead, we concentrated on improving the infrastructure that supports buying and maintaining military equipment.

Re-engineering the military aircraft support infrastructure has the highest potential payoff because it costs so much and there is clear duplication among the services. This redundancy within the aviation support structure is an important part of the true "four air forces" issue; reducing it should be given high priority.

We recommend re-engineering DoD's centralized contract audit and oversight functions, including greater use of private sector audits and electronic auditing wherever possible. Furthermore, the Defense Contract Management Command and the Defense Contract Audit Agency should be combined. More generally, DoD needs relief from laws and regulations that prevent using proven commercial business processes, such as activity-based cost accounting and international quality assurance standards.

Many of the defense agencies and field activities that provide the bulk of DoD's centralized support must become more efficient and responsive to their customers. We recommend establishing a board of directors for each defense agency and major field activity. These boards should include customer representatives and be supported by expert consultants to promote adoption of innovative management practices. Their purview should extend beyond financial accounting matters to address the full range of customer needs.

We recommend collocating the military departments' aircraft program management offices and consolidating common business and engineering activities that support the program managers. Matrix support will reduce overall personnel costs by assigning experts to individual Service program offices only as needed. This should also increase aviation interoperability and commonality over time.

To streamline logistic support of aircraft already in service, we recommend a single manager for support of fixed-wing aircraft and another for helicopters. These single management elements should direct the most efficient mix of interservice support for all military aircraft. As more "wholesale-level" support for DoD weapon systems is outsourced, the SMEs will also manage contracting with private-sector providers.

The Department of Defense's budget and program decisions are central to our concerns because they often result in the de facto allocation of roles, missions and functions. Improved performance requires changes to the planning, programing and budgeting system; a new information framework; and adjustments to headquarters organizations.

The department's planning and budgeting system is the best of its kind in the federal government, but it can be improved. Among the system's needs are unified strategic direction, more attention to front-end planning, fewer program changes late in the process and less attention to unnecessary detail.

We recommend a quadrennial strategy review at the beginning of each presidential term and whenever else events dictate. That review would be an interagency effort directed by the National Security Council.

The QSR should consider recent and anticipated geopolitical and policy changes, technological developments, opportunities for shaping the security environment, the plausible range of DoD budget levels and a robust set of force and capability options. We also suggest a different force planning concept that evaluates various force/capability mixes possible at each of several different funding levels to determine relative value across the spectrum of possible contingencies.

We recommend a thorough restructuring of the existing DoD planning and budgeting system. Taking its initial direction from the QSR, the system we propose features more orderly treatment of issues, stronger program and budget direction by the secretary and greater stability. We also believe that our system will provide better focus on important issues by senior officials and require considerably less staff effort devoted to detail.

The department's decision-making information support framework -- the Future Years Defense Program -- is too input oriented. We recommend a mission/output-oriented information framework to better enable the assessment of forces and capabilities to perform missions derived from the National Security Strategy. The new framework would include improved metrics for measuring and tracking performance.

The department's process for acquiring weapon systems can be improved by considering joint war-fighting concerns, including interoperability and commonality of support when requirements are first established. This implies a greater ability and willingness of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council and OSD to address DoD needs in the aggregate and earlier involvement in tradeoffs of cost vs. performance by civilian acquisition executives.

Changes are necessary in DoD's corporate headquarters. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to the secretary of defense. The chairman's advice should include a comprehensive joint vision developed with the CinCs and the services. In addition, we recommend strengthening the charter of the JROC (chaired by the vice chairman) over joint requirements formulation, and increasing the technical and analytic capacity of the Joint Staff to better assist the chairman and vice chairman.

Elements in OSD are frequently preoccupied with managing, and sometimes advocating, particular programs or functions. We recommend reducing OSD's functional management responsibilities so the staff can concentrate on giving the secretary of defense policy advice and analytical support.

A new OSD integration function should be developed to assist the secretary in assessing diverse and competing recommendations and providing unified direction for the defense program.

We recommend several other organizational changes, including giving mission-oriented charters to elements in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy and combining the staffs that support the military department secretaries and the service chiefs.

Finally, to strengthen the quality of DoD's civilian leadership, we recommend a new management concept, improved opportunities for advancement and growth for career civilians and limitations on the number of DoD political appointees.

In conclusion, the challenge is to shape America's military institutions so that they are better prepared for a changing and uncertain future; this means ensuring effective unified military operations. It is time to complete the work begun by the Goldwater-Nichols Act by making joint thinking and acting a compelling reality throughout DoD.