Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee

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On

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Senator McCain, Senator Reed, and members of the Committee, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to share some of my research and views on defense reform. The invitation to testify to the Senate Armed Service Committee is a great honor, especially considering the stature of your other witnesses today and their records of service to our country. It is humbling to be sitting next to them and in front of you today. I understand the Committee is interested in organizational changes that could increase the effectiveness of U.S. military operations and whether current combatant command and Service structures provide the necessary strategic planning and military readiness to ensure operational excellence. I hope to provide some useful insights for your consideration on those topics.

My testimony identifies three major impediments to high performance in military operations that can be corrected. Most of my recommendations involve the Department of Defense, but I also argue that interagency teams could be structured and incentivized to improve performance for some types of military operations. Fielding interagency team would require some changes in the way we structure and run the larger national security system.

My views on these topics are shaped by my experience as a Foreign Service officer and mid-grade executive serving in both the Pentagon and Department of State over the past 20 years, and by research this past decade at National Defense University, including organizational performance studies in support of the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review and for the Project on National Security Reform. I am on record as a strong proponent of defense and national security organizational reform, and this testimony draws heavily upon previous research. Where appropriate I cite such research in support of my recommendations.

Why Reform?

Not everyone will agree there is a defense performance problem worthy of the Senate's attention. However, I believe that reforms in several areas could improve the effectiveness of military

operations. A brief overview of major trends helps explain why. At the outset of World War II we were not as well prepared for war as our enemies, but we prevailed by learning, adapting and out-producing our foes. At war's end the United States accounted for just under forty percent of global gross domestic product. The resource preeminence of the United States put us in a good position to ensure permanent readiness against the global Soviet threat. During the Cold War we built new institutions to safeguard our freedoms, and we out-lasted the enemy. After Vietnam we instituted an all-volunteer military, executed a revolution in military training techniques, leveraged technology successfully with increasingly realistic testing (compared to our World War II performance), and finally fixed our most egregious operational command and control problems with the Goldwater-Nichols legislative reforms. The result was stable nuclear deterrence and unparalleled world-leading conventional military forces. Our one glaring weakness throughout this period was poor performance against irregular threats.

The terror attacks on September 11, 2001 highlighted this weak spot and also its strategic import. 9/11 drove home the reality that terrorists are willing to and capable of launching mass-casualty attacks against us and our allies. In responding to 9/11 the national security system performed well in some areas. Success was usually a function of departments and agencies conducting their core missions extremely well, or leaders pioneering ways to generate new levels of interdepartmental cooperation on nontraditional missions. However, the system performed poorly on the whole, demonstrating our historic inability to counter irregular threats well. The United States spent prodigious sums, organized world-wide coalitions, swept large enemy formations from the field, and targeted terrorists and insurgent leaders on an industrial scale, but exercised little influence over eventual outcomes in Afghanistan and Iraq. We squandered resources, lost public support, and arguably generated as many terrorists as were eliminated.

Despite fifteen years of war, the threat of catastrophic terrorist attacks remains. Distracted, if not exhausted by fifteen years of conflict, we have seen our notable advantages in major combat capabilities diminish relative to some nations that are exploiting the global explosion in information technologies. Areas that used to constitute an unhindered, unilateral advantage for U.S. forces are now subject to challenge. The credibility of our aging deterrent forces against weapons of mass destruction is also growing suspect. With our share of global gross domestic

product roughly half of what it was following World War II and projected to decline in relative terms, peer competitors are likely to emerge much earlier than we anticipated following the collapse of the Soviet Union and prior to 9/11.

This broad overview of defense performance prompts several observations about the need for defense reform. First, we are long past due for correcting our persistent difficulties in dealing with irregular threats. Second, if resource overmatch was ever a good strategy, it has lost its luster and is no longer affordable. To maintain our current advantages in major combat operations we need to improve our ability to make good decisions on investments in military capabilities going forward. Third, effective military operations alone are insufficient. They must be integrated effectively with other instruments of power, something we currently do quite poorly. It is imperative that we improve our ability to collaborate across departments and agencies. In particular, the time has come to give the President the authority to delegate his authority for integrating department and agency efforts to manage or resolve complex, high-priority national security problems. In sum, we need a Pentagon that can manage the full range of security challenges; rationally allocate resources to priority missions; and collaborate well with other departments, agencies and allies. Consequently it is important to identify major impediments to these performance aspirations and understand how they might be overcome.

Reforming Irregular Conflict Capabilities

Although irregular conflict is the subject of endless debate and terminological controversies, we understand its distinguishing features and why they require different military capabilities. In large-scale, force-on-force combat operations the primary operational objective is destruction of enemy capabilities, which sets the conditions for subsequent political relationships. In major combat operations military necessity take precedence over all other concerns except the purpose for which the war is being fought. All other objectives remain in doubt until the adversary's ability to resist is overcome. In contrast, military objectives are subordinate to, and constantly informed by, numerous political considerations in irregular conflict. In irregular conflict the immediate objective is not to take terrain and destroy forces, but to alter political relationships and, by extension, adversary behavior. Military operations are constantly tailored to and

constrained by political considerations even down to the tactical level, which these kinds of military operations different and demanding.

Irregular conflicts take much longer, so patience and perseverance are necessary, and taxing. Protracted engagements make it imperative that costs—human, material, and political—be kept low. Popular political support (host country, U.S. domestic and international) determines which side will be able to best inform and sustain their operations, and our partners know and understand local populations far better than we do. When one of the protagonists can no longer count on the passive or active support of key population groups, they must reduce their presence, withdraw, or otherwise abandon their efforts. Thus, both to reduce costs and be effective, it is often advisable for the United States to work well with third parties, which is not easy to do.

For all these reasons, prevailing in irregular conflict requires military forces with some new or modified capabilities, or increased quantities of existing capabilities in the following areas:

- <u>Force protection</u> to keep casualties proportionate to the perceived US interests at stake; without it U.S. public support dwindles over time. In irregular conflict force protection is more demanding because it is difficult to identify the enemy, which means ambushes, surprise attacks, and acts of terror are the norm.

- <u>Discriminate and proportionate force</u> to keep the enemy on the defensive without provoking popular discontent, and over time to make the population feel secure enough to resist enemy coercion or better, to assist U.S. and allied forces. In major combat operations the U.S. military wants to avoid harm to non-combatants or exerting more force than necessary to achieve military objectives. However, these objectives are subordinate to the success of their military missions. In irregular conflicts the opposite is true; proportionate and highly discriminate use of force is a prerequisite for success.

- <u>Special intelligence</u> in irregular conflict is complex and more critical. In large-scale combat operations the intelligence community can focus on a standard set of primary indicators and warnings for enemy disposition, composition, and movement. Our most likely combat

opponents and their order of battle are usually known well in advance of hostilities. In irregular conflict intelligence is required on short notice and for a broad set of social, political and military subjects, often cannot be collected by traditional technical means, and is more difficult to interpret once collected.

- <u>Persuasive communications</u> to influence foreign audiences with messages supportive of U.S. policy are more important in irregular conflict for the simple reason that it is difficult for terrorists to survive without popular support and impossible for insurgents. Hence, every effort must be made to convince the population that even passive support of the enemy is not in its interests. Persuasive communications are always difficult because they require a deep understanding of target audiences, but in irregular conflicts they also need to be immediately responsive to tactical developments to be effective.

- <u>Modified command and control</u> to ensure unified effort across diverse government departments and agencies and with allies. The requirement to apply all instruments of national power instead of relying primarily on military force means that irregular conflict is an intensely interagency effort. Moreover, policy and strategy in irregular conflicts are more fluid and must repeatedly be translated into realistic operational requirements. In turn operational plans must be carefully tailored to support policy objectives and repeatedly updated.

This list could be expanded, and the nomenclature, relative importance, situational impact, role of technology and many other aspects of irregular conflict could be debated, but these broad requirements are well-known and well-represented in all the classic literature on the topic, including our own U.S. Marine Corps *Small Wars Manual*. So it is significant that the Department of Defense did a poor job of fielding capabilities for irregular conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This past year researchers at National Defense University completed a comprehensive review of lessons from the past decade and a half of war.[1] After reviewing 23 senior leader accounts from both the Bush and Obama administration, as well as more than one hundred insider accounts, influential articles, blue-ribbon commissions, think tank and inspector general reports, it is clear there is a broad consensus that we performed poorly on strategic communications, specialized intelligence and equipment, and in providing civil-military administrative capacity for better governance.

There were bright spots to be sure. We achieved unprecedented integration of all-source intelligence in support of high-value targeting, and ground forces received equipment previously available only to Special Operations Forces (SOF): body armor, latest generation night vision goggles, intra-squad communications gear, tactical satellite radios, tactical unmanned aerial vehicles, etc. We went from having 8 unmanned aerial vehicles in Iraq in 2003 to 1,700 by 2008, and within 18 months we deployed thousands of mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles to theater—an accomplishment some have described as an industrial feat not seen since World War II. To get these kinds of capabilities to the troops the Pentagon created new organizations and streamlined procedures and Congress supported these efforts by making copious amounts of funding available. Even so, and despite urgent requests from commanders in the field, much of this type of capability was late to need, and arrived only after senior leaders mounted extraordinary efforts to squeeze them out of a reluctant bureaucracy. Worse, much of this new-found capacity is now being abandoned.

For example, it took the Department a long time to realize that defeating insurgents, partnering with host-nation officials, and winning popular support are hardly possible without a profound understanding of local social and political relationships at all levels. The need for socio-cultural understanding has been cited as one of the "top 5" lessons learned from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a view echoed by many senior leaders in the Department of Defense. Yet the U.S. military's traditional pattern of behavior on sociocultural knowledge is reemerging. After we develop sociocultural expertise at greater-than-necessary expense and too late to ensure success,

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[1] Christopher Lamb with Megan Franco, "National-Level Coordination and Implementation: How System Attributes Trumped Leadership," in Richard D. Hooker, Jr., and Joseph J. Collins, Hooker and Joseph Collins, eds., *Lessons Encountered: Learning from the Long War*, National Defense University Press, 2015.

we then abandon the hard-won capability as part of post-conflict budget reductions or out of deference to prevailing American strategic culture, which favors technology, small-unit combat skills, and large-scale military maneuver training rather than a deep understanding of our adversaries and their societies. Much of the organizational architecture developed to provide sociocultural knowledge to U.S. forces is being dismantled. The Army's Irregular Warfare Center and Human Terrain Team programs have been shut down, and officers participating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program are not being promoted at rates comparable to the rest of the Army.

We also were slow to recognize irregular threats that arose in the aftermath of our regime-change operations. It took years to produce leadership, concepts, and viable plans for countering insurgents. When some of our more capable and innovative field commanders combined traditionally effective counterinsurgency techniques with an astute appreciation of local political realities, they were uncommonly successful. In a healthy, high performing organization these extraordinary successes would have been rapidly recognized, rewarded, and replicated. Our record in this regard is spotty.   Anecdotally, it appears extremely successful field commanders were passed over for promotion or promoted only after intervention by senior civilian leaders.

The replication of these successful examples was even more limited. The U.S. military adopted proven counterinsurgency techniques slowly and unevenly. In part this was because the methods used to achieve tactical successes challenged prevailing policy and strategy. Tactical partnering with local forces could fuel sectarian sentiments and undermine formal Iraqi governmental structures the United States was committed to supporting; it also often involved working with local leaders with checkered pasts or who were judged to be marginal players; and it ran counter to our policy of transferring responsibility for security to Iraqi military forces as quickly as possible, which was based on the assumption that the mere presence of U.S. forces was an irritant to be minimized as a matter of priority. For all these and other reasons the tactical successes of Marine and Army field commanders in late 2004 and 2005 failed to prompt a rapid reassessment of these policy and strategy assumptions.

Our desire to pass responsibility for security to host-nation forces also was handicapped by lack of preparedness for irregular conflict. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States had no plans for establishing local security forces and proceeded on an *ad hoc* basis. Once the efforts were under way we developed security forces modeled on U.S. institutions even though the local political, economic, and social conditions "made U.S. approaches problematic and unsustainable without a significant U.S. presence."[2] We also encouraged short tours and optimistic reporting, which made it difficult to evaluate actual progress. In turn, the longer it took commanders to recognize gaps between desired and actual performance, the longer it takes to adapt more effective methods.

In short, our performance in Afghanistan and Iraq reinforced awareness that we are poorly prepared for irregular conflict. This was true before 9/11 and, with the exception of hunting high-value targets, largely remains the case today. Innumerable studies and Pentagon directives over the past decades have identified this problem and attempted to fix it by encouraging the Services to take the mission more seriously. On at least three occasions since World War II national leaders spent major political capital trying to force a solution. The Soviet Union's support for "wars of national liberation" led President John F. Kennedy to embrace Special Forces and unconventional warfare, even replacing an Army Chief of Staff who he believed was unsympathetic to his plans. In 1986, after years of poor responses to terrorism and other political-military problems, Congress mandated new special operations and low-intensity conflict organizations over the objections of the Pentagon. More recently, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates launched his own personal effort to get the Pentagon to better balance conventional and irregular capabilities. These efforts failed, and it is not hard to see why.

We keep asking organizations that are raised, trained and equipped to conduct large-scale force-on-force combat operations to also conduct irregular conflict as a lesser-included mission. They invariably give priority to what they consider their more important core missions, and are slow to comprehend, much less invest in irregular conflict concepts and capabilities. They argue irregular conflict is not sufficiently different from conventional war to justify separate capabilities. They insist SOF have the mission covered, and that allies and other U.S.

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[2] T.X. Hammes, "Raising and Mentoring Security Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq," in *Lessons Encountered.*

departments and agencies should do more. If forced to invest in irregular capabilities, the Services pursue less costly non-material initiatives like education and training that can be more easily reversed. They argue their future capabilities will be equally effective in all types of conflicts, so there is no need to buy equipment for irregular conflict now. If they must buy such equipment they typically abandon it as quickly as possible to avoid maintenance costs.[3] If assigned an irregular conflict campaign, our field commanders learn on the fly.

Besides Service cultures focused on major combat operations, there are other factors handicapping readiness for irregular conflicts. Asking all the Services to be equally responsible for the mission just makes it easier for everyone to ignore the responsibility and harder for anyone to be held accountable for results. Also, irregular conflicts require a flexible approach to requirements and acquisition but the Pentagon usually does not do business this way. General requirements for irregular conflict are well-known but the amount and specific types of equipment needed are highly situation-dependent, transitory and difficult to establish in advance. What we need is a solid research and development base and some programs of record that can be rapidly expanded depending on emergent needs. This is precisely what Secretary Gates wanted to do when he called for the institutionalize procurement of [irregular] warfare capabilities." But with the exception of USSCOM, which was granted unusual acquisition authorities by Congress, this sort of approach to irregular conflict programs is difficult in today's Pentagon. Finally, without a clear mission-lead the largest rather than the best-suited military organizations dominate command and control of deployed forces in irregular conflict (again SOF sometimes being an exception). As a result we often operate with less effectiveness early on, make the situation worse and inadvertently raise costs.

In my opinion we now have overwhelming evidence that the United States will not have a standing and ready irregular conflict capability until it clearly assigns that mission to specific organizations that are culturally capable of executing it and rewarded for doing so. USSOCOM promulgates four SOF "truths:" that in special operations humans are more important than hardware; SOF cannot be massed produced; quality is better than quantity; and competent SOF

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[3] Christopher J. Lamb, Matthew Schmidt and Berit Fitzsimmons "MRAPs, Irregular Warfare, and Pentagon Reform," Occasional Paper, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, June 2009.

cannot be created after emergencies occur. These same truths largely apply to irregular conflict. We did not get world-class SOF without a powerful organization assigned to organize, train, equip and employ these forces, and the same has proven true for irregular conflict more broadly. Conventional forces can "learn" and prepare for irregular conflict after the fact, but the costs of doing so are high and the results are poor.

Different ways of ensuring irregular conflict capabilities have been proposed, including the creation of large new organizations, but the most sensible and politically feasible option would be to leverage the parts of the Department of Defense that are historically most proficient in irregular conflict: Special Operations Forces and the U.S. Marine Corps. In effect, we need to adjust military roles and missions to assign a clear division of labor for irregular conflict in a tiered approach. USSOCOM should be, and to some extent already is, the preferred option for small unit direct and indirect irregular conflict, but it needs to be upgraded to conduct indirect missions better.[4] The U.S. Marine Corps has comparative advantages at the lower-end of the conflict spectrum compared to the Army, and with some increases in authorities, force structure and equipment could take the lead role successfully for larger-scale irregular conflicts.

USSOCOM already is assigned the lead for many irregular conflict missions that can be conducted by small units, but its indirect capabilities need to be upgraded. By indirect, I do not mean "non-lethal," as is often supposed. I mean working by, with and through foreign forces and populations with both lethal and non-lethal capabilities. Our preferred approach to irregular conflict should be working with host-nation forces, both to be more effective and to reduce the resource and political commitments of the United States. Indirect missions require greater specialization in what some call SOF's "warrior-diplomat" or "cross-cultural" skill sets, including a deeper understanding of indigenous forces and populations. Direct SOF missions require more emphasis on technical skills, particularly those highly specialized capabilities involved in direct action behind enemy lines. For SOF to be equally well prepared for indirect and direct missions some units must weight their training and equipment toward warrior-diplomat skills while others concentrate on what some refer to as the SOF "commando" skills.

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[4] The case for improving USSOCOM's indirect capabilities is made in "The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces," a prepared statement of Christopher J. Lamb before the Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, July 11, 2012.

If USSOCOM is going to excel not only at special operations but also at irregular conflict more generally, it must put much greater emphasis on its ability to conduct missions indirectly. SOF indirect approaches and capabilities are as valuable and challenging to build, maintain and employ as SOF direct action capabilities. Somewhat counter-intuitively, SOF indirect capabilities have actually atrophied this past decade; arguably when they could have been most useful. Successful indirect efforts in places like the Philippines were overshadowed by SOF direct action missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even SOF units that traditionally demonstrate greater appreciation for indirect approaches often paid more attention to direct action against terrorists and insurgent leaders in those countries.[5] Army Special Forces in particular have sacrificed area orientation, language proficiency, and cultural appreciation within their assigned regions since 9/11. The operational demands of the Iraq and Afghan theaters led to a substantial degradation of SOF indirect skills.

Reconstituting these critical capabilities requires significant investment and leadership. USSOCOM leaders are aware of the problem and have been trying to upgrade SOF indirect capabilities. How well they are doing is a matter of great import. USSOCOM needs better socio-cultural knowledge; better persuasive information capabilities; more robust and quicker access to civil affairs skills; adjustments to the SOF selection process; a Washington presence for its indirect leadership and some indirect programs; new approaches to interagency collaboration on indirect approaches to irregular conflict; new authorities to oversee security assistance programs on a multi-year basis; and perhaps separate budget lines for direct and indirect capabilities. If the Committee looks into it and concludes USSOCOM is failing to provide these kinds of improvements, it may want to investigate new sub-unified commands for USSOCOM that cooperate but concentrate on the direct and indirect approaches, respectively.[6]

For irregular conflict problems that cannot be contained and well-managed by small SOF teams, we would call upon the U.S. Marine Corps. The Marines would be assigned the lead role for

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[5] "The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces," Prepared Statement of Christopher J. Lamb before the Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, July 11, 2012. 25 pages.

[6] A case for this is made in David Tucker and Christopher Lamb, U.S. Special Operations Forces, Columbia University Press, 2007.

large-scale, direct interventions against irregular opponents. The Marines would partner with USSOCOM, concentrate on the least secure areas that demand the most direct attention, and in more secure areas use their infrastructure to assist USSOCOM's small-unit, indirect operations with host-nation forces. Of course the Army, Navy and Air Force would lend support for joint operations as necessary, but in terms of training and equipping their forces, they would be free to concentrate on major combat operations. Any irregular conflict mission requiring more than the combined forces of USSOCOM and the U.S. Marine Corps should probably be reconsidered, but *in extremis* other forces could be assigned to operate under their direction as necessary.

The U.S. Marine Corps would require additional resources to be well prepared for its new, priority irregular conflict responsibilities. It would need new authorities for command of irregular conflict missions and fielding of irregular conflict equipment similar to the authorities Congress granted USSOCOM. Similarly, and again like USSOCOM, the Marines should be granted special irregular conflict acquisition authorities so that they could rapidly integrate and field relevant technology and equipment tailored for irregular conflicts. In addition, it would be necessary to increase Marine force structure and transfer some existing capabilities for irregular conflict from the Services; the types of irregular conflict capabilities the other Services have long refused to purchase and maintain. This would include slower fixed-wing aircraft for reconnaissance and close fire support; brown- and green-water vessels for inland waterways and coastal patrol boats; up-armored vehicles; etc. The Marines would maintain a prudent technology base for irregular conflict capabilities that could be modified and expanded as circumstances warrant, much as they have tried to do with non-lethal weapons. It should be relatively easy for the Marines to integrate these kinds of irregular conflict capabilities since they already have air, naval, amphibious, ground and support capabilities that are integrated down to the tactical level.

With USSOCOM taking the lead on small unit irregular conflict missions like the raid on Bin Laden's hideaway and the advisory mission to the Philippines, and the Marines taking responsibility for larger direct interventions against irregular opponents such as we faced in Afghanistan and Iraq, the nation would be much better prepared for irregular conflicts. And the Services would not be distracted from their focus on major combat operations. Instead of

spending valuable senior leader time and scarce training resources on difficult programs like regionally-aligned brigades, the Army, Navy and Air Force could concentrate on reestablishing our diminishing lead in major combat operations.

This division of labor would be more efficient in the short and long-term. Short-term savings would come from abandoning universal requirements like language training, irregular forces at major combat training centers, efforts to improve training of foreign forces throughout our force structure, etc. Critical irregular conflict requirements such as force protection (e.g. up-armored vehicles), discriminate force (e.g. non-lethal weapons, Military Police); intelligence (e.g. persistent counter-insurgent ISR, Human Terrain Teams, Foreign Area Officers and programs), persuasion (e.g. psychological operations), and command and control (e.g. multi-level shared communications architectures) and other niche capabilities (e.g. countering-IEDs) could be transferred and consolidated under USSOCOM and the Marine Corps.

The Department of Defense already expends considerable resources to maintain a high state of readiness for SOF and the Marines, particularly in training, air and sea-lift, and amphibious capabilities. These organizations are already postured for global, expeditionary operations with minimum overseas infrastructure. It is inherently more efficient to ask them to serve as the first, second and preferred proponents for irregular conflict than to ask all the Services to maintain readiness for the same. For example, the Marines already have the expeditionary infrastructure to manage brown- and green-water operations more efficiently than the Navy, and provide responsive close air support in irregular conflict operations more readily than the Air Force.

Over the long-term the Department of Defense could expect better performance and additional savings from operational efficiencies. Assigning the irregular conflict mission to USSOCOM and the U.S. Marine Corps would increase the chances that such operations could be conducted with a small footprint and expert command and control. Irregular conflict requires inherently "joint," interagency and multinational operations. Both USSOCOM and the Marines are intrinsically joint and capable of working with interagency partners as demonstrated historically and in recent operations. SOF are particularly well adapted to work through third parties with small numbers of advisors. If an irregular conflict problem exceeded SOCOM's capacity the

Marines could draw upon those historical, cultural and structural attributes that make them a more efficient irregular conflict mission partner than the larger Services, including a higher tooth-to-tail ratio.[7] If, in extreme circumstances, the other Services were needed they would support the Marines and SOF. Inverting the general rule that the largest forces have the top command slots would help ensure tactical irregular operations are controlled by appropriate expertise from the beginning.

This new division of labor makes particular sense in a time of declining resources when organizations naturally focus on what they consider to be their "core competencies." A better division of labor takes advantage of this natural tendency to focus on core missions by reducing duplication and increasing specialization (i.e. competence). Currently Army efficiency is undermined by the view that it should be a "full-spectrum" rather than a decisive land force. For example, a proper active-reserve balance would be easier to achieve if the Army focused just on decisive land battle. Similarly, Marine Corps efficiency would improve if the Marines' strategic concept unequivocally included irregular conflict. The Department of Defense already absorbs the cost of amphibious expeditionary units that have air, sea and land elements in an organization that has historically conducted irregular conflict well. It is more efficient to ask that organization to expand its existing elements to include capabilities for irregular conflict. In an emergency, the Marines—supported by Air Force and other naval forces—would still pack enough punch to stop most conventional aggressors until the Army arrived on the scene.

Reforming Pentagon Decision Making

Limited Pentagon decision-making capacity also constrains the effectiveness of military operations. A decade ago the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review report put major emphasis on improving decision-making capacity. It said "the complex strategic environment demands that our structure and processes be streamlined and integrated to better support the President and joint warfighter;" and "recent operational experiences demonstrated the need to bring further agility, flexibility and horizontal integration to the defense support infrastructure." The report asserted

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[7] It has been argued that the "every marine is a rifleman" ethos "allows a high degree of adaptability" for irregular warfare missions. Michael R Melillo, "Outfitting a Big-War Military with Small-War Capabilities," Parameters. Carlisle Barracks: Autumn 2006.Vol.36, Issue 3.

the Department had "moved steadily toward a more integrated and transparent senior decision-making culture and process for both operational and investment matters;" that it had "made substantial strides in…the creation of new organizations and processes that cut across traditional stovepipes;" and "most importantly, the Department has made notable progress toward an outcome-oriented, capabilities-based planning approach that provides the joint warfighter with the capabilities needed to address a wider range of asymmetric challenges."[8]

The report was correct about the need to improve Pentagon decision-making capacity, but overly optimistic about the amount of progress in that direction. Like many organizations the Pentagon is divided into hierarchical structures that represent different bodies of expertise: e.g. policy, intelligence, personnel, program analysis, acquisition, and budgeting. Within these bodies are subdivisions that further specialize in more narrowly defined subjects. These stove piped divisions each build and nurture expertise in a relatively narrow body of knowledge. There are advantages to such organizations but typically they are incapable of rapid, integrated decision making, which the 2006 report acknowledged the Pentagon needed to keep pace with the evolving security environment. That conclusion is even more valid today.

The Pentagon has elaborate processes and laborious coordination procedures to integrate diverse expertise across its functional organizations. Generally speaking, however, these attempts at integration produce compromises that paper over critical assumptions, distinctions, and differences of opinion that need to be resolved. Separate organizations in in the Office of the Secretary of Defense lead various stages of these decision-making processes. Each office leading a component part of the strategy process depends on other parties in the process to do their work well and protect the integrity of the decision process. Each organizational boundary crossed opens up an opportunity for the dilution of strategic logic.

The overall process values compromise more than clear choices among competing alternatives. All organizations' equities are protected to the extent possible, which results in long lists of desired objectives. Offices managing the process further down the logic chain use those wide-ranging priorities as justification for picking and choosing their own areas to emphasize, which

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[8] *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Defense, 2006: pp. 65ff.

loosens the strategy logic, sometimes beyond recognition. The same types of compromises affect the Joint Staff's efforts to create meaningful joint operational concepts. Because the Department cannot make trades at these broader levels in the analytic chain of reasoning—strategy, planning and operational concepts—the rest of the downstream processes—requirements, programs and budgets—is managed without the benefit of broader context.[9] Each link in the chain of reasoning tends to operate semi-autonomously. Thus the process is not truly "strategy driven," which is a major reason the Department is unable to rationally allocate resources to produce the most valuable capabilities for the most important missions.

When diverse groups do meet to cooperate there are disincentives for information sharing and collaboration. Involving other parties slows and waters down the resultant products. One Joint Staff assessment in support of the 2006 QDR effort identified over 860 cross-cutting groups that Joint Staff personnel attended. All but a handful of these groups were information-sharing and not decision-making bodies. Even so, they shared information incompletely because extant organizational incentives militate against transparency. When measured by what they produce, these groups absorb large amounts of staff time and energy without producing what the Chairman and Secretary need most, which is truly integrated assessments of problems, their causes and preferred solutions.

The bureaucracy's penchant for producing consensus products encourages talented and highly motivated officials to get their positions directly to senior decision-makers by circumventing the formal coordination process. If the issue is simply a narrow functional concern, then a quick decision this way can be made without much risk. But the most important issues are increasingly multidisciplinary or cross-functional, and proposals presented by one functional entity invariably reflect a limited perspective that does not benefit from all relevant information. The narrow, functional proposals presented to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary often contradict one another, and with the limited information provided, it is difficult for these senior officials to

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[9] The bureaucratic factors shaping these processes are further described in Christopher Lamb, "Pentagon Strategies," in David Ochmanek and Michael Sulmeyer, eds., *Challenges in U.S. National Security Policy: A Festschrift Volume Honoring Edward L. (Ted) Warner,* (Arlington, VA: RAND, 2014); and in "Acquisition Reform: The Case of MRAPs." Prepared Statement of Christopher J. Lamb before the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, June 24, 2014.

determine which position is the more compelling and why. Thus it is difficult for senior leaders to make well-reasoned tradeoffs among competing alternatives.

In essence, Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries have to serve as their own integrators of functional expertise, diving deeply into the issues that matter most to them to investigate the "stove piped" or "least common denominator" products they receive and root out critical issues. This is what Secretary Gates did to ensure the delivery of needed armor and theater intelligence and surveillance assets to Iraq. Yet this is a difficult task for Secretaries of Defense and an inefficient use of their limited time. Pentagon organizations husband their information carefully. Data is safeguarded; analysis is not collaborative, methods, metrics and lexicon are not common or agreed upon; and institutional knowledge is not easily retained or retrieved for the benefit of all components. So it takes a great deal of time for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary to assess the competing positions presented to them. Moreover, they are constrained by the political liabilities of overriding powerful personalities and institutional interests. Hence, decisions tend to be made slowly if at all, or if in response to a crisis, made without the benefit of requisite information and supporting analysis.

Not surprisingly, these circumstances frustrate Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries, who feel poorly supported by their staff. They often conclude, incorrectly, that it is the sheer size of the staff that prevents better decision support. In reality, it is the inability of their functional leaders to collaborate and produce integrated problem assessments and solution proposals. Staffs could be cut in half and the Secretary would receive 50 percent less paperwork, but he would not receive one smidgen more of the better integrated products he needs. In reality, Pentagon middle managers and action officers are working extremely hard; just not to good effect. The Pentagon's large staff ends up working marginal resource allocation issues, and consumes too much time and energy for too little effect. In essence, large amounts of the Secretary's most important and expensive commodity—human talent—is wasted.

Improving decision-making capacity in the Department of Defense requires holistic organizational reform. However, several fundamental changes are especially important. The Secretary cannot be the first point of integration for the Department's most important cross-

functional endeavors. He needs horizontal organizations empowered to generate cross-cutting problem assessments and solution alternatives. Such teams could manage cross-cutting functions for the Secretary but also oversee real-world missions that require the rapid integration of diverse functional specialties. They would examine problems "end-to-end" and be the designated strategic integration point across all bodies of expertise, freeing up senior leaders to focus on key strategic decisions. The teams would intervene selectively to eliminate friction and sub-optimal efforts where component parts of the Department are not collaborating to maximum effect. The presumption is that the Secretary will back up their authority to intervene and obtain the results he wants. Leaders of functional organizations would be free to focus on problems resident within their domains.

For the horizontal organizations to succeed, they must be constituted correctly and their leaders empowered appropriately. They must be given proper resources, to include office space, administrative support, and members committed for specific periods of duration and levels of effort. The groups also must be given clear objectives; preferably a clear, written mandate that identifies what is to be accomplished and why. The groups must be allowed to decide how to accomplish their objectives, identify their metrics for evaluation and feedback, and what expertise they need. Group members that represent bodies of functional expertise must be given incentives to collaborate with the other members of the group and not simply represent their parent organization's interests. This means the group leader must be able to return the expert in question to his parent organization and must have a say on their evaluations. If these horizontal organizations are not empowered, the reorganization efforts will fail. They will simply become another layer of advisory groups that further confuse the rest of the Pentagon entities about their respective roles and responsibilities.

These cross-cutting teams would encounter less resistance from functional organizations if the Department could do a better job of determining which problems are actually cross-functional rather than primarily the responsibility of a single functional domain. In this regard the Department's tendency to label all operating concepts "joint" complicates a proper division of labor between the Services and joint entities. Our broadest operating concepts are invariably joint but many subordinate operating concepts like anti-submarine warfare should be considered

"Service-centric" and left to the Services to formulate and update. There may be an element of joint command and control or information sharing involved in Service-centric military concepts of operation but the vast bulk of the requisite expertise is resident in a single Service. Distinguishing between operating concepts that are intrinsically joint, like theater air and missile defense, and concepts that are largely the preserve of one Service, would make a meaningful division of labor between the Services and joint entities much easier.

To better support decision making by senior officials and their cross-cutting teams, the Pentagon also needs a reformed decision support culture. In the training revolutions of the 1970s the Services transformed their combat capabilities by introducing objective, empirical feedback into training exercises with the aid of new simulation technologies and after-action reports to improve learning and future battlespace decision making. The new training approaches instilled respect for collaboration, information sharing, and empirical objectivity. A similar transformation of Pentagon decision support capabilities is needed, and it would require sustained attention from the Secretary.

To begin with, the Secretary would have to make a point of insisting on collaboration from senior leaders. He can do this through his personal example and key hiring decisions. The Secretary also would need a small technical support staff that I have referred to elsewhere as a Decision Support Cell,[10] to oversee the new approach to information sharing in support of analysis. The cell would ensure that decision support is transparent, based upon clear assumptions about security challenges and options to meet those challenges. In particular, it would be responsible for ensuring all organizations have equal access to the same joint scenarios (to bound the assumptions about priority problem sets); authoritative joint operating concepts (testable preferred ways to solve operational problems); joint data (common assumptions about forces, performance, terrain, etc.); joint methods of analysis (transparent means of assessing risk); joint operational risk metrics (standards for measuring value and risk); and repositories of institutional knowledge (the means to retrieve and build upon knowledge). Currently no single entity has the authority to produce these necessary precursors for good analysis of alternatives.

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[10] Christopher Lamb and Irving Lachow, "Reforming Pentagon Decisionmaking with a Decision Support Cell," Strategic Forum No. 221, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, July 2006.

Finally, the Department needs some selective investments in greater jointness that would allow it to empirically test and exercise innovative improvements in operational military capabilities. Even though Joint Forces Command was disbanded and widely assessed as inefficient, we still need the ability to generate standing joint task force headquarters that can conduct realistic experimentation in and testing of innovative joint operating concepts. The Services have the technical capacity and resources to fully explore Service-centric operating concepts, but we lack commensurate capability to test new joint concepts with joint headquarters.

In fact, the ability to optimize joint headquarters and operations has largely eluded us. It is stunning to realize that we were not even able to achieve unified command of all military forces in Afghanistan until 10 years of war had passed. Secretary Gates is forthright in acknowledging command relationships in Afghanistan were a "jerry-rigged arrangement [that] violated every principle of the unity of command."[11] SOF and conventional forces had trouble coordinating their operations, and even within the SOF community, which ostensibly shares a common chain of command and considers unified effort a core organizational value, we could not achieve unified effort. Despite broad agreement among national security leaders, USSOCOM leaders and many individual SOF commanders that the indirect approach to counterinsurgency should take precedence over kill/capture operations, the opposite occurred. SOF units pursuing counterterrorism took precedence and often failed to sufficiently coordinate their efforts with other SOF units conducting counterinsurgency. It is apparent we need a much more aggressive effort to field truly joint task force headquarters and experiment with the same during peacetime.

<u>Enabling Unified Effort in the National Security System</u>

The national security system's inability to routinely integrate the efforts of diverse departments and agencies has long been recognized, but the impact of this limitation on successful military operations is less appreciated. For example, it is widely assumed that senior leaders are uniquely responsible for the unsatisfactory outcomes in Afghanistan and Iraq. When things go wrong it is natural to blame leaders, reasoning that things would have gone better if they had made better

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[11] Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Knopf, 2014): 206.

decisions. It also is understandable that poor outcomes are often linked to common decision-making errors such as flawed assumptions, improper analogies, tunnel vision, and cognitive dissonance. Almost by definition when things go badly, these types of limitations are in play to some extent. However, it is also important to acknowledge that leaders are not in complete control of outcomes and that they are constrained to make their decisions within an organizational and political system with behaviors they do not fully control. For these reasons, good outcomes are not always the result of great decision making, and bad outcomes are not always the result of flawed decision making. The war in Iraq is a case in point.

A close examination of the historical record demonstrates that disunity of effort provides a better explanation for what went wrong in Iraq than the belief that senior leaders based their decisions on optimistic assumptions, made them without examining a sufficient range of options, or failed to adjust their decisions as circumstances changed. For example, many believe U.S. leaders made the "heroic" assumption that Iraqis would welcome U.S. forces with open arms and there would be no civil unrest in response to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. U.S. leaders were not so naïve. They thought the majority Shiite population would welcome Saddam's ouster but the Sunnis much less so, and that in any case whatever welcome U.S. forces received would not last. Intelligence on Iraq predicted a "short honeymoon period" after deposing Saddam, and almost all decision-makers in Defense, State, and the White House worried that an extended American occupation would be costly and irritate the local population. Most senior leaders preferred a "light footprint" approach in both Afghanistan and Iraq. As many commentators have noted, there were multiple planning efforts prior to the war by State, Defense, and other national security institutions that underscored how difficult the occupation might be. These insights found a ready audience in the Bush administration, which came to office disdaining extended nation-building missions and warning that the U.S. military was "most certainly not designed to build a civilian society."[12]

Yet there were deep disagreements among senior leaders about how best and how fast to pass authority to the Iraqis while reducing U.S. presence. The Department of Defense preference was a short transition period for military forces with a quick turnover of authority to Iraqi expatriates.

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[12] Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000.

The Department of State, including Secretary Colin Powell (and later Ambassador Bremer), did not want an extended occupation of Iraq either. However, State believed it would be difficult to find others willing to take responsibility for the future of Iraq and that the United States would have to do so since it had engineered the war. State wanted the speed and scale of U.S. postwar activities commensurate with the U.S. interests at stake. It thought the quickest way out of Iraq was to make the maximum effort to stabilize it following the termination of large-scale fighting, which meant a large ground force for security, plenty of development assistance, and as much international support as could be mustered.

The White House explicitly considered the U.S. obligation to Iraq after deposing Saddam Hussein. The President decided to give Iraqis a chance at democracy because he thought it was the right thing to do, albeit not a vital security interest for the United States. This decision meant State and DOD could not ignore the postwar mission but left plenty of wiggle room for disagreements about how the mission should be conducted. The two departments obliged. They disagreed over the importance of ensuring good governance in Afghanistan and Iraq, over the appropriate level of U.S. commitment to this mission, over how it should be carried out, and over which department would do what to execute postwar tasks. These disagreements should not have been a surprise; they had been a longstanding bone of contention between the two departments.

Consistent with previous experience, President Bush did not resolve the differences. The President gave the lead for postwar planning to DOD to preserve "unified effort." But he also promised Ambassador Bremer that he would have the authority and time he needed to stabilize Iraq (that is, to take the Department of State approach). As the situation deteriorated, State was increasingly adamant about security and DOD was increasingly adamant about early departure for U.S. forces. State increased its appeals for more troops, while Rumsfeld's generals told him counterinsurgency was an intelligence-dependent mission and that more troops would be counterproductive. When Ambassador Bremer worried the Department of Defense was setting him up to take responsibility for failure by pushing an accelerated schedule for turning over authority to the Iraqis, President Bush reiterated his promise to support more time and resources for Iraq. The NSC staff refereed the debates between State and DOD, looking for ways to effect compromises. The views of the two departments were not reconciled and the success of the

postwar mission was compromised—not because of optimistic assumptions about Iraqi sentiments, but because differences between strong departments were not managed well.

I believe our greatest, most persistent, most deleterious implementation problem in Afghanistan and Iraq was our inability to integrate the vast capabilities resident in the national system for best effect. Many blue-ribbon commissions and senior Department of Defense leaders agree. General Wayne Downing, a former four-star commander of the nation's special operations forces, argued after 9/11 that, "the interagency system has become so lethargic and dysfunctional that it materially inhibits the ability to apply the vast power of the U.S. government on problems," a fact made evident by "our operations in Iraq and in Afghanistan" and elsewhere.[13] Several Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also are on record lamenting insufficient interagency cooperation, including General Richard Meyers[14] and General Peter Pace. General Pace, after years of managing the military portion of the effort against Al-Qaeda, argued the enemy could not be defeated without better interagency cooperation. He bluntly concluded, "We do not have a mechanism right now to make that happen."[15] Pace and other senior military officers argued for legislation to force interagency cooperation much as the Goldwater Nichols legislation at the end of the 1980s forced joint cooperation among the military services.[16]

Recent Secretaries of Defense are also on record complaining that interagency mechanisms do not work well. Secretary Cohen called the interagency policymaking process in the late 1990s "dysfunctional," and Secretary Rumsfeld made the same point, saying the endless and fruitless interagency meetings he participated in "sucked the life" out of senior officials. He told the 9/11 Commission that a legislative fix was needed. When Secretary Robert Gates replaced Secretary Rumsfeld he told Congress that:

> Nearly nine years under four Presidents on the National Security Council staff taught me
> well about the importance of interagency collaboration and cooperation. The U.S. clearly

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[13] Shanker, Thom, "Study Is Said to Find Overlap in U.S. Counterterror Effort," *New York Times*, March 18, 2006.
[14] 2nd Annual C4ISR Summit, August 20, 2003, Danvers, Massachusetts, Selected Speeches, Testimony, Articles, October 2001-September 2005, page 225.
[15] "Pace Calls for Better Interagency Work," UPI, August 9, 2007.
[16] Naler, Christopher L. Unity of Effort: An Interagency Combatant Command. Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2005, 4. <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA509122>.

needs a government-wide approach to the challenges we face today and will face in the future. If confirmed, this type of interagency collaboration and cooperation will be one of my priorities.[17]

Not long into his tenure as Secretary of Defense, however, Secretary Gates concluded wholesale reform of the national security system was needed to improve cross-organizational collaboration.[18] He noted: "The U.S. government has tried, incrementally, to modernize our posture and processes in order to improve interagency planning and cooperation mostly through a series of new directives, offices, coordinators, tsars, and various initiatives," and he concluded these half-measures were insufficient.[19] Two years later he was even more emphatic, arguing that: "America's interagency toolkit is a hodgepodge of jerry-rigged arrangements constrained by a dated and complex patchwork of authorities, persistent shortfalls in resources, and unwieldy processes."[20] Michelle Flournoy, Secretary Gates' Under Secretary of Defense for policy matters later added an exclamation point to his concerns:

> To put it bluntly, we're trying to face 21st century threats with national security processes and tools that were designed for the Cold War -- and with a bureaucracy that sometimes seems to have been designed for the Byzantine Empire, which, you will recall, didn't end well….We're still too often rigid when we need to be flexible, clumsy when we need to be agile, slow when we need to be fast, focused on individual agency equities when we need to be focused on the broader whole of government mission.[21]

In other words, we have long recognized that insufficient unity of effort in the national security system is a major handicap for successful military operations, but we have been at a loss for how

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[17] United States. "Advance Policy Questions for Dr. Robert M. Gates." Posed by the Senate Armed Services Committee. 5 December 2006. < http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/documents/Gates_Responses_Nov2006.pdf>

[18] Robert M. Gates. "Landon Lecture" (speech, Kansas State University, November 26, 2007), Department of Defense, http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199.

[19] Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, DC), Saturday, January 26, 2008.

[20] Robert M. Gates. Remarks at The Nixon Center, February 24, 2010, available at www.nixoncenter.org/index.cfm?action=showpage&page=2009-Robert-Gates-Transcript.

[21] Garamone, Jim. "Flournoy Calls for Better Interagency Cooperation." *American Forces Press Service*. 11 June 2010. <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=59601>.

to correct this liability. My hope is that recent research from National Defense University can help point the way forward.

Various senior leaders and studies increasingly argue for interagency groups that operate as teams (sometimes labeled as fusion cells, task forces, etc.).[22] One problem with such recommendations is that they are short on details that explain how these constructs would differ from current interagency groups. For example, when the Project on National Security Reform recommended "empowered" interagency teams, it was able to cite only a few positive examples of such phenomena that were revealed by mass media or personal accounts from practitioners. To rectify this shortcoming, researchers at National Defense University made a point several years ago of producing in-depth studies of four rare but highly successful interagency teams:[23]

- the Active Measures Working Group, which countered Soviet disinformation successfully for most of the 1980s and sent shock waves to the top of the Soviet political apparatus at virtually no cost to the United States;

- the Bosnia Train and Equip task force, which stabilized the military balance in Bosnia and helped secure the peace in the aftermath of vicious inter-ethnic fighting;

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[22] The author is on record as a proponent of interagency teams. See "Overcoming Interagency Problems." Prepared Statement of Christopher J. Lamb before the Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee on Implementing the Global War on Terror, U.S. Congress, House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, March 15, 2006. Others have made the same recommendation. For example, see Project Horizon Progress Report, Washington D.C., Summer 2006.

[23] The cases studies are: "Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference"; http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-11.pdf; "Joint Interagency Task Force–South: The Best Known, Least Understood Interagency Success"; http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-5.pdf; "The Bosnian Train and Equip Program: A Lesson in Interagency Integration of Hard and Soft Power"; http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-15.pdf; Post 2001: "9/11, Counterterrorism, and the Senior Interagency Strategy Team: Interagency Small Group Performance in Strategy Formulation and Implementation"; http://thesimonscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/IAS-003-APRIL14.pdf; and "Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation"; http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-4.pdf.

- the leadership group at Joint Interagency Task Force South, which runs an organization that accounts for more than 80 percent of *all* federal, state and local government disruption of cocaine shipments;

- and the interagency High Value Targeting teams used by Special Operations Forces to put terrorists and insurgents on the defensive and set the stage in 2007 for the dramatic reversal of the security situation in Iraq.

A careful comparison of the case studies reveals several prerequisites for success. Many interagency groups fail to perform well because representatives attending initial meetings begin to doubt that senior leaders care whether the effort succeeds or not. Evidence that senior leaders strongly support the group's mission is therefore a critical first prerequisite. The nature of the support senior leaders provide varied in the cases studied, but was sufficient to strongly suggest that both Congress and the Executive Branch leaders considered the missions assigned to the groups national priorities and wanted them pursued on an interagency basis. These preferences were communicated formally through directives and mandates, and informally through attention paid to the groups and their issues. Otherwise, the senior leaders generally allowed the groups great latitude, and did not provide a lot of overt intervention to smooth the way to success.

After senior leader support, agreement on purpose seems to be the next most important precondition for success. The case studies suggest it is possible to start with a broad idea of the group's mission and then forge a more specific concept for execution as the group better understands the problems it is tackling. All four groups also benefited from access to required resources, although they were managed differently by each group. When senior leaders make a point of providing special resources for a group it reinforces and communicates their support. Not all missions require the same types or amounts of resources, however. For example, in the case of the group charged with countering Soviet disinformation, the primary resource required was information resident in multiple departments and agencies about Soviet activities and techniques. In the case of the U.S. program to arm and train Bosnian Federation forces, substantial amounts of cash and equipment were required.

The next most important prerequisite for success was team leadership. Successful team leaders exhibited a propensity for taking charge, taking risk, and assuming responsibility for outcomes. They put mission success ahead of parent organization's preferences, which was risky bureaucratic behavior. Successful interagency team leaders all delegated substantial authority, trusted their subordinates and encouraged initiative. Interestingly, teams were able to produce great results with a mix of high performing and mainstream personnel from diverse departments and agencies and without an extraordinary reward system in place. Some enduring teams shifted from more mainstream membership to higher performers as time went by and recruiting new team members became easier. However, the ability of these teams to perform at a high level with the members initially assigned to them is noteworthy.

It also is interesting that team members proved highly productive without tangible incentives. The vast majority of members on all the teams had no expectations of personal recognition or monetary rewards, either before or during their service. On the contrary, many assumed their careers would be put on hold or retarded by assignment to the teams. It was actually more important for team leaders to provide positive feedback to the departments and agencies providing the personnel than to the personnel themselves. This was true for all four teams, although some team leaders made of point of making their team members feel appreciated. What team members in all four cases did receive, however, were huge psychological dividends when it became clear they were making a difference on important missions. As a result, most members were devoted to their teams and motivated to work long hours—around the clock and seven days a week when circumstances demanded it.

In addition, successful teams also required some unique structure. In particular, they greatly benefited from colocation and full-time focus on their missions. Small size was another common structural attribute. All the groups were between seven and fifteen persons (in the case of Joint Interagency Task Force South, the organization's leadership team was this size). However, all four teams aggressively pursued support from outside the team by engaging senior leaders, negotiating partnerships with other organizations, and monitoring entities conducting work on behalf of the teams. Even more important for high productivity, all four groups were structured for end-to-end mission management. This meant that within the scope of their mission they took

responsibility for the entire sequence of functions required to achieve desired outcomes. If the group operated at the national level, as was true for the Reagan-era Active Measures Working Group and the Clinton-era Bosnia Train and Equip task force, end-to-end mission management meant taking responsibility for policy, strategy, plans, operations, assessments and adjustments to all components of the mission effort to ensure desired outcomes.

The willingness to take responsibility for all activities necessary to produce results was critically dependent upon each group's leadership. Typically an interagency group conceives its mission in limited terms. At the national level, the strong inclination is to limit an interagency group to just a policy or planning exercise. At lower levels there is a tendency to limit a group's mission to whatever the lead or most powerful participant prefers to do. However, in the four success cases we studied, the team leaders accepted a broader "end-to-end" mission concept that increased responsibility for actual results but also increased the risks of failure. In some cases, like the Bosnia Train and Equip task force, the need to produce results in the field was essentially part of the original mission statement. Even so, the task force embraced the intensely operational responsibility for results when they could have avoided doing so. In other cases, like the Active Measures Working Group and Joint Interagency Task Force South, the leaders dared to take responsibility for "end-to-end" mission performance when it was much less necessary.

The "end-to-end" conceptualization of all four missions was critical for productivity. It encouraged responsibility and accountability. Once the groups established their lead role for all components of the mission, there were no acceptable excuses for poor performance. There were no other actors working a portion of the process that could be held responsible for failures. In such circumstances, only the inherent difficulty of the mission or inadequate group performance were likely explanations for poor results. In all four cases, the interagency groups rose to the challenge and held themselves accountable for demonstrable progress toward group objectives. The "end-to-end" approach adopted by the four groups did not mean they operated independently or that they did everything themselves. The groups received guidance. The groups had to work within the parameters established by higher authorities. Sometimes the scope of the group's activities was clear; other times it had to be discerned or explored. For example, the Active Measures Working Group determined that it had to concentrate on

countering Soviet disinformation rather than taking on more aggressive active measures against the Soviet Union. This was a point of dispute in the group, but the leaders knew the more aggressive measures would collapse support for the group and decided to leave those efforts to a classified group working out of the National Security Council staff.

The research identified other group attributes correlated with success, including the need to preserve good to great levels of trust and the ability to learn from experience, which includes leader support for innovation and a willingness to delegate responsibilities. However, the main point to be made here is that stellar interagency performance is possible even in our current system; it's just exceedingly uncommon. The reason for this is that the groups require special empowerment and must work around strong system impediments and disincentives. We would be much better served by a national security system that supports rather than thwarts such interagency collaboration.

At first the prerequisites for success identified by our research might seem mundane. Most people would assume that a team requires adequate authority and resources to perform its mission well,[24] and that having senior leaders assign a small group a clear mission, a capable leader and necessary resources meet those requirements. However, it is important to note that the groups did not have the directive authority that some observers believe is essential for high-performing interagency groups.[25] They were able to use the senior leader support they received to encourage collaboration across departments and agencies, and once they had a collaborative effort under way, the legal authorities resident in multiple departments and agencies were sufficient to accomplish their missions. Having directive authority would make it easier to field and sustain high performing interagency teams, but the case studies suggest it is not a necessary precondition for success when other support is in place.

In addition, we need to recognize how rare it is for interagency groups to have a clear purpose and adequate resources to accomplish their missions in the current national security system.

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[24] Bradley L. Kirkman and Benson Rosen, "Antecedents and Consequences of Team Empowerment," *The Academy of Management Journal* 42 no. 1 (Feb., 1999), 58-74.
[25] Seidman notes "many believe that [interagency committees] are fatally flawed because there is no provision for a central directive authority" that could compel involuntary cooperation. Seidman, Harold. *Politics, Position, and Power: The Dynamics of Federal Organization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980: 219, 224.

Most interagency small groups are assigned broad missions without a clear focus. It has long been argued that it is much more difficult for standing interagency committees with general responsibilities for coordination to perform effectively, in contrast to interagency groups that are organized to pursue a more limited objective and that "go out of business once their assigned task if accomplished."[26] Joint Interagency Task Force South, which manages the counternarcotics mission on a continuing basis, belies the notion that standing interagency groups cannot perform well. However, it does seem from the four cases researched that a well-defined mission and group consensus on what is being accomplished are critically important to team performance.

Normally interagency groups also lack the resources necessary to accomplish their missions. Because of the way government is structured and resourced, it is common to approve interagency strategies without providing the resources essential for success. The participating departments and agencies are expected to provide the resources voluntarily. In the national security system, other departments and agencies frequently look to the large Department of Defense to pick up the tab for new initiatives, and it typically resists. The tendency to assign missions without identifying commensurate resources for the group means many interagency small group efforts are doomed to fruitless bickering over which organization will pay, or to a loose coordination effort since every organization naturally demands control over any resources it contributes.

It is even rarer for interagency small groups in the national security system to own an entire mission area as opposed to being assigned just one segment of the enterprise; for example, establishing *policy*; making *plans*; and executing some *portion* of the required operations. Rarely does an interagency group manage its mission "end-to-end" as was true for the four cases studied. Members of the four successful groups believed mission focus and comprehensive responsibility for the mission were keys to success. Groups with a more diverse set of responsibilities that dilute the group's focus, and groups that are responsible for only one segment of a mission chain find it much more difficult to achieve success.

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[26] Seidman argues "standing interagency committees with responsibility to coordinate *in general* (emphasis in original)" perform much less well than "*ad hoc* interagency groups organized to study and report on specific problems." Harold Seidman, "Coordination: The Search for the Philosopher's Stone," in Harold Seidman and Robert S. Gilmour. *Politics, Position, and Power: The Dynamics of Federal Organization*, 5th ed., (Oxford University Press: New York, 1980): 217.

In the current system most small groups operate without directive authority. Instead, they are based on the voluntary cooperation of the departments and agencies that staff them. In cases where simple information sharing is all that is necessary or desired, interagency small groups can succeed. If active cooperation or a high performing team is necessary, then interagency groups needs assistance to escape the centrifugal forces that pull them apart and incline their members to protect their parent organizations' equities rather than give priority to the group's mission. Assuming our case studies are a good representation of system tendencies, senior leaders who want an interagency small group to succeed need to set it up for success by:

1) Communicating the group's mission clearly, the priority they attach to it and the fact that it can only be undertaken on an interagency basis;

2) Providing the group resources as required by the mission;

3) Finding a leader committed to the mission who is willing to buck his own parent organization's predilections;

4) Permitting the group to collocate and work the problem full-time if the mission's level of difficulty demands it; and

5) Allowing the leader and his or her team the latitude to manage their problem "end-to-end," or from strategy to its execution and assessment, so that the group effectively controls all aspects of the solution chain.

It helps if Congress supports the Executive Branch on the first two points. In taking these steps it also helps if senior leaders provide tangible evidence of the importance they attach to the interagency group's mission. Implicit in these conditions is the recognition by all parties (senior leadership, parent organizations and the team leader and members) that mission success takes priority over protecting department and agency preferences. If the group is established with the opposite expectation it will not be able to solve a complex problem[27] and the wisdom of allocating scarce resources (human and materiel) to the effort probably needs to be reevaluated.

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[27] This is a lesson from a case study of the Senior Interagency Strategy Team at the National Counterterrorism Center, which turned out to have some major performance problems. Christopher Lamb and Lt Col Erin Staine-Pyne, "9/11, Counterterrorism, and the Senior Interagency Strategy Team: Interagency Small Group Performance in

High-level political support cleared the way for the four groups we investigated to function, but did not guarantee their success. The team's leader and members must exploit the opportunity they have been given by forging a consensus on how to accomplish their assigned purpose. They need to:

> 1) Define the group's purpose with an "end-to-end" conceptualization of the problem and solution, taking responsibility for all activities necessary to achieve results;
>
> 2) Pursue an open if not collaborative decision making process;
>
> 3) Partner aggressively with other entities to manage each segment of the end-to-end solution chain;
>
> 4) Establish and maintain trust among group members; and
>
> 4) Learn from experience and adjust accordingly to manage the assigned problem well.

Although our case studies demonstrate that interagency collaboration is possible in the current system, they also suggest why it is an uncommon and fragile commodity. Successful interagency groups require national leaders, group leaders and teams that are willing to challenge the structure, decision-making norms, culture and incentives of the current national security system. This is seldom the case, which is why high performing interagency small groups are rare, and even when they do occur, are prone to breakdown and atrophy.

Ironically, the President will need more help from Congress to generate these kinds of interagency teams than the Secretary of Defense would need for producing cross-functional teams in the Department of Defense. One reason for this is that the authorities of the President's cabinet members are well-established in law and not easily overridden except by direct personal intervention by the President. This point was illustrated by the Department of Defense shortly after 9/11. The Department cited current law on the chain of command for our armed forces to argue Defense had to be put in charge of everything involving Iraq. "No one else could take charge of security, because no one else had the legal authority to command our armed forces."

Strategy Formulation and Implementation," Col. Arthur D. Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation, Ft. Leavenworth, March 2014.

Thus, Defense argued, if the President wanted "unity of leadership" and "unity of effort" he would have to put the Secretary of Defense in charge of everything involving Iraq.[28] Defense thought this argument was conclusive and it apparently convinced the President. However, the actual result of making Defense the lead agency for Iraq was less unified effort.

Legislation allowing the president to appoint leaders, or what some call "mission managers," to run interagency teams is also probably a legal requirement. Gordon Lederman, the former leader of the Project on National Security Reform's Legal Working Group, argues that, "Any individual in the interagency space who exercises meaningful authority to compel departments to act" would have to be an "officer of the United States," and officers of the United States must have their positions established by statute as required by the Appointments Clause of the Constitution. Codifying mission manager authorities in statute would also help secure resources for the President's priority interagency missions: "The President may create structures and processes and fund them temporarily by transferring resources, but ultimately it is Congress that provides resources on a sustained basis. Without Congress's input and resources, a presidentially-imposed solution to interagency integration may wither for lack of funding."[29] Thus, the legislation allowing the president to delegate his integration authorities should also include a mechanism for funding interagency team activities and provide for associated congressional oversight.

In addition to legislation, it would be important to structure and lead the teams well. The Project on National Security Reform has proposed some baseline standards for such groups that would be a good place to begin. If such teams were empowered and structured to emulate the attributes of teams that have performed well in the past, the President would find them useful. Empowered teams would produce better strategy because they would be less susceptible to the bureaucratic and political pressures that militate against strategy formulation.[30] They also would execute

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[28] Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: Harper, 2008): p. 316.

[29] Gordon Lederman, "National Security Reform for the Twenty-first Century: A New National Security Act and Reflections on Legislation's Role in Organizational Change," Journal of National Security Law and Policy, vol. 3 (2009), 363ff. See also Christopher Lamb and Edward Marks, "Chief of Mission Authority as a Model for National Security Integration," Strategic Perspectives, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, December 2010, p. 10.

[30] The bureaucratic and political pressures that militate against strategy are discussed at length in "Pentagon Strategies," and "National-Level Coordination and Implementation," op. cit.

strategy with much greater unity of effort. Hence they would be more effective, and the President would be inclined to use them more frequently. Their use would then proliferate, which would create the need for some complementary reforms in the National Security Council staff.

As the use of interagency teams increases, the need to de-conflict their efforts will grow. Such teams tend to pursue their objectives with great determination and without regard for work in adjacent or overlapping strategic challenges. The good news is that the National Security Council staff, freed from intense issue management, could then pay more attention to system management and better de-conflict the work of the interagency teams. It also would be important to ensure such teams were not assigned inappropriate problems to solve; i.e. ones that are not inherently cross-functional. If the teams encroached on issue areas that are predominantly the responsibility of one department or agency, there would be much greater substantive and political resistance to their use.

Ultimately, these developments would move us in the direction of a new model for the National Security Advisor and staff. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the choice is not merely between an "honest broker," and "a commanding intellect," or some combination thereof. What the President needs is a "system manager" with responsibility for making the national security system better serve presidential intent. The Project on National Security Reform has made a detailed case for how such a revised national security staff should work.[31]

Conclusion

In my estimation our historic unpreparedness for irregular conflict, our inability to rationally allocate defense resources to priority military capabilities and missions, and the lack of unified effort among our departments and agencies are major impediments to improving military effectiveness. Fixing these problems will be as difficult as it is necessary. Not fixing them

[31] *Forging a New Shield.* Arlington, VA: Center for the Study of the Presidency, Project on National Security Reform, 2008; available at: http://0183896.netsolhost.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/pnsr_forging_a_new_shield_report.pdf.

means we will continue to be vulnerable to irregular threat in an age where small groups have the intent and increasingly the capability to execute catastrophic terrorist attacks; that potential adversaries will be much more likely to close the gap on our advantages in major combat operations; and that future national security missions will experience the same frustrating lack of unified purpose and effort that has handicapped and in some cases crippled us in the past.

For all these reasons I am encouraged and appreciative of the Senate Armed Services Committee's decision to thoroughly investigate Pentagon performance issues. Congress has intervened to improve military capabilities in the past, and done so to very good effect when it has developed a deep understanding of the underlying causes of performance problems. The Committee's thorough, bipartisan approach to identifying the root causes of behaviors that limit military performance is altogether laudatory and a great encouragement to those of us who work on defense matters. I wish you every success and would like to again express my appreciation for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this vital subject.