

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Defense Reorganization, the Road Ahead for the 21st Century

by

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ABSTRACT

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This paper proposes that, in spite of all of the Department of Defense (DOD) reform initiatives and studies, there is still a clear need for additional DOD reorganization. The road ahead for the 21st Century should include eliminating an unnecessary layer of staff, the service secretariats. The end of the Cold War, the War on Terrorism, resource pressures, and the multiple threats our nation faces demand an organizational structure that is streamlined, agile, effective, and efficient. DOD organizational history, especially since 1947, is replete with studies and legislation that show the need to reduce redundancy in DOD. The studies and legislation, given today's environment and situation, have shown how prophetic the authors have been to indicate change was required then and even more today.

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DEFENSE REORGANIZATION, THE ROAD AHEAD FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

We never had comparable unified direction in Washington. And even in the field our unity of operations was greatly impaired by differences in training, doctrine, in doctrine, in communications systems and in supply and distribution systems that stemmed from the division of leadership in Washington...it is now time to take stock, to discard obsolete organizational focus...We cannot have the sea, land and air members of our defense team working at what may turn out to be cross-purposes, planning their programs on different assumptions as to the nature of the military establishment we need, and engaging in an open competition for funds.

—President Harry S. Truman, December 1945 Message to Congress.¹

The Department of Defense's (DOD's) current organizational structure is the result of several reforms taken over the 20th century. Since the mid-1940s, significant debate and analysis concerning defense reorganization started as a result of the weaknesses in the U.S. government's ability to integrate the efforts of the military departments during World War II. The early reform initiatives, since the end of World War II, paved the way for the most important and far reaching of these efforts, the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act. These studies, reports, and legislation highlighted the need for increased jointness, changes in the defense structure, and the elimination of service secretaries. The British Armed Forces, faced with similar challenges, found innovative ways to remove unnecessary layers of command. Their experience offers an interesting case study for the United States to consider. Today, the United States seek ways to achieve improved lines of communication and authority to face the challenges of the new security environment. The need for a streamlined, efficient, and flexible effort is now more important than ever, especially in light of the war on terrorism and the focus on transformation to meet future threats. To further place this issue in today's perspective, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld stated in a September 17, 2002 memorandum that "The war on terrorism does not supplant the need to transform DOD; instead, we must accelerate our organizational, operational, business, and process reforms."²

Our bloated DOD bureaucracy continues to exist in spite of mandated reductions, numerous studies, and defense reform laws. Defense reform must include the elimination of the service secretariats and a careful functional analysis to determine what function would go away and if retained where they could be served best. This paper will cover the history behind our defense reorganization efforts, apply the British model for comparison, and state the case for streamlining our defense structure by eliminating an unnecessary layer of staff in the defense bureaucracy.

DEFENSE REFORM, THE BEGINNINGS

The truth is that most of the service rivalries that have troubled us in recent years have been made inevitable by the laws that govern our defense organization.

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958 message to Congress³

After World War II, our national leadership realized that there should be a single department in charge of the Armed Forces; that further unification was necessary. This period in our nation's history became a critical juncture for the U.S. defense establishment. The National Security Act of 1947 established the Joint Chiefs of Staff, created the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, and more importantly, a centralized Department of Defense.

Prior to 1947, the Secretaries of the Army and the Navy held cabinet status. There was great independence of action in a decentralized system that had proved to be unfit for the task when the United States conducted coordination with the British Defence Staff. A British Air Marshal once said, "the violence of inter-service rivalry in the United States had to be seen to be believed and was an appreciable handicap to their war effort." Inefficiency, lack of motivation to work in a shared joint team, and little guidance or oversight from above, led to a structure that was highly duplicative and in some cases disruptive to planning since each organization competed for influence and resources.

The one aspect where there seemed to be consensus was that all services opposed any efforts to achieve unification. The Navy and Marine Corps were against it for organizational reasons. The Navy was against the way the Army organized and conducted operations; the Naval service was used to operating independently on, under, and above the sea. For the Marine Corps, it became a fight for survival. This struggle to survive and fear of losing the land and aviation missions drove the Navy and Marine Corps together. The Army Air Forces emerged from World War II too powerful and popular. But the services were not alone in their dislike for unification.

Congress found itself divided on the issue of unification. The individual services had strong supporters among members of the legislature. Competition with the executive branch and political constituencies became the main hurdles to cooperation. Congress feared a president who was able to organize the military in such a way to make it difficult for Congress to have control, oversight, or put them at a disadvantage. Just as we have seen in more recent times, politicians wanted to protect bases in their districts, jobs for their constituents, and defense projects in their districts. Amid this discord and disunity, with a veritable standoff between President Truman and Congress, the War and Navy Departments had to find other

ways to change the defense structure. These efforts became the basis for the National Security Act of 1947.

The 1947 legislation created the Air Force with its own secretary, and achieved service consolidation under the Secretary of Defense, a National Military Establishment. The Secretary of Defense emerged as the overseer of a loose confederation of service secretaries who were more independent than anticipated, voting members of the National Security Council, and part of the President's cabinet. They were free to appeal directly to the President or the Director of the Budget concerning any policies they disagreed with. Another byproduct of the 1947 legislation was services with great power to build a service-dominated system.⁴ Interestingly, debate concerning the National Security Act included forming a combined Army-Navy Department. Ultimately, the act became a compromise to appease the Congress and reduce service concerns. The efforts intended to merge organizations into a single voice created four independent ones instead. The newly created Joint Chiefs of Staff consisted of the Army Chief of Staff, the Air Force Chief of Staff, the Chief of Naval Operations, and a relatively small staff of no more than one hundred personnel. However, the Joint Chiefs did not have a chairman. The resulting entity emerged as a body loosely configured and unable to effect coordination.⁵

This dysfunctional way of operating would not last long. The natural consequence of the 1947 Act became two more amendments, in 1949 and 1958, to strengthen the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) at the expense of the service secretaries. The first Secretary of Defense (SECDEF), James Forrestal experienced first hand the shortcomings of the 1947 Act. In spite of his efforts to obtain consensus over funding, roles and missions, he realized that he could not decide, much less get support from the services to march ahead in an unified manner. The 1949 amendment to the 1947 Act provided the SECDEF authority over the services and most importantly established the position as the adviser to the President in matters pertaining to defense. Further reforms in 1949 removed the service secretaries from the National Security Council and along with the service chiefs, from the operational chain of command; they became independent civilian policymakers. This change created the conditions for the service staffs to work directly with OSD, thus bypassing the service secretariats. Later, changes in the chain of command and assignment of forces to combatant commands further reduced the authority of the service chiefs.⁶

By 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, with a lifetime of military service behind him, understood that further reforms were needed when he stated that: "Separate ground, sea and air warfare is gone forever. If ever again we should be involved in war, we will fight all elements, with all services, as one single concentrated effort. Peacetime preparatory and organizational

activity must conform to this fact.”⁷ Also, assessing the presidential-congressional compromise, on top of the Army-Navy fight, President Eisenhower said: “in that battle the lessons were lost, tradition won. The three services were but loosely joined. The entire structure...was little more than a weak confederation of sovereign military units.”⁸ President Eisenhower wanted further reform and attempted to do so by pushing new legislation.

The 1958 DOD Reorganization Act established a clear chain of command extending from the President through the Secretary of Defense, with advice from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the commanders of unified and specified commands. Separate executive action by President Eisenhower removed the military departments as executive agents for unified and specified commands.⁹ Thus, the 1958 DOD Reorganization Act established the SECDEF, from a weak overseer to a position of authority with direction and control over all of DOD. The law also created a dual chain of authority; one to the military departments and the other to combatant commanders. Military departments had the mission of preparing forces for combat: organize, train, equip, and provide logistic, administrative and other support. Conversely, the joint side, by law, assumed responsibility for employing the forces provided by the military departments.

Additional studies recommended more drastic changes between 1960 and 1970. However, there were no major changes to defense organization. The Symington Committee report to President John F. Kennedy on the Defense Establishment postulated the need to eliminate redundancy and waste, and increased DOD centralization by the elimination of the service secretaries and their staffs. It also proposed military service reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense in an effort to diminish service rivalry.¹⁰

Defense reorganization continued through several national debates throughout the 1970s. The quest for the elimination of redundancy and inefficiency led the way to more studies. A 1970 Blue Ribbon Defense Panel showed considerable evidence of duplication between the secretariat and service staffs and recommended merging both, retaining service secretariats with an enhanced role, purportedly to make them more effective. The report noted that: “The diffusion of responsibility and accountability, the freedom to ‘pass the buck’ to the top on hard decisions, and the opportunity to use the extensive coordination process to advance parochial objectives, are circumstances to which many in the Department have adapted comfortably.”¹¹

In 1976, the Defense Manpower Commission noted that three layers, i.e., OSD, the service secretaries, and military departments, were excessive and concluded that the military departments and the Office of the Secretary of Defense were sufficient to run the military. This supported the argument that if redundancy did not exist to support effectiveness, then it should

be eliminated. If a service was conducting defense-wide tasks, they could be done at DOD level. A Departmental Headquarters study in June 1978 highlighted further organizational redundancy and bureaucratic excess as well. Then SECDEF Harold Brown, in his book "Thinking about National Security," argued against service headquarters that were too strong, negatively affecting efforts to achieve jointness and support to theater commanders.¹² By 1982, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, except for General Edward C. Meyer, the Army Chief of Staff, opposed defense reorganization. Also, that year, in a fateful turn of events, the Joint Chiefs disagreed with a study requested by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. The study's recommendation was against any major reorganization. Secretary Weinberger and President Ronald Reagan accepted the study recommendations in what became the first official stance against reform. As expected, this fueled the reform fight between the Congress and the Pentagon.

In 1985, the political winds blew in favor of defense reform with influential members of Congress like Barry Goldwater, John Tower, and Les Aspin, still pursuing the issue in spite of strong opposition from the military services. 1985 would prove to be a fateful year. National security advisor Robert McFarlane convinced President Reagan to establish the Packard Commission to examine, once again, defense reorganization. This was a significant event, considering that only three years before, Reagan accepted Weinberger's recommendation not to make major Pentagon reforms.

The Packard Commission endorsed reforms from the Senate and House Armed Services Committees. Admiral William Crowe, a supporter of reform became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Although officially, the Pentagon's position was against defense reforms, in private, Crowe endorsed the congressional efforts. The door finally opened to create the right conditions that led to the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act.

THE GOLDWATER-NICHOLS DOD REORGANIZATION ACT

One of the landmark laws of American history. This law is probably the greatest sea change in the history of the American military since the Continental Congress created the Continental Army in 1775.

—Les Aspin, 1986, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee¹³

The debate leading to the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act lasted almost five years. General David C. Jones, USAF (Ret.) wrote in an article that during frequent NATO meetings where he conversed with Admiral Terrance Lewin, then Chief of the British Defence Staff, they exchanged concerns about the lack of sufficient jointness. General Jones noted that they came up with

similar recommendations. Implementing change was a priority for these leaders, both facing comparable challenges. Admiral Lewin obtained quick approval from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to implement defense reforms in the British military. General Jones had the opportunity to help spearhead the effort, albeit in significantly longer time. During congressional testimony General Jones said: "It is not sufficient to have just resources, dollars, and weapon systems; we must also have an organization which will allow us to develop the proper strategy, necessary planning, and the full warfighting capability. We do not have an adequate organizational structure today."¹⁴ At the time, these remarks were tantamount to being out on a limb, a definite departure from accepted notions and official policy. The reaction was as expected and swift to come.

General Jones' call for reform was quickly attacked within the Pentagon bureaucracy. Although he was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jones was alone in his appeals for reform. In Congress, initially, it failed to generate much interest, and it was not until about a year later that the U.S. Senate engaged in meaningful debate about defense reorganization. Agreement between both houses took almost five years. The military reform detractors were still influential and Congress wanted to get it straight.

Senator Barry Goldwater, then Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, took on the challenge of reorganizing defense, making it his top priority. First, Senator Goldwater understood that in order to achieve his goal he would need bi-partisan support. Second, he knew that any and all efforts would be without Pentagon help and over their vehement objections. Senator Goldwater described the legislation as "...the most significant piece of defense organization in the nation's history," while many senior leaders in the Pentagon used terms as: "...will make a hash of our defense structure, ...would create chaos to the point where I would have deep concerns for the future of the United States," to "the bill would have very adverse consequences for our national defense." The debate saw two groups, equally determined in opposite sides of the issue. On one side you had the four military services deeply entrenched and reluctant to give up their independence and prerogatives and on the other pro-reform members of Congress, seeking to stop four decades of disunity and warfighting shortcomings.¹⁵

The Goldwater-Nichols Act improved the Secretary of Defense's ability to lead the department and enhanced the roles of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the combatant commanders. For example, there is general acceptance that it was very effective at bringing more jointness into the military's operational practices. However, not all agree that it accomplished all that it intended. In spite of some much needed help, it fell short of the mark.

While it brought jointness in the way the services operate, it still fell prey to compromise language allowing continued redundancies and failing to merge the secretariats.^{16,17}

The Goldwater-Nichols Act debate highlighted key deficiencies as the reasons for reorganizing the DOD. The first reason was lack of timely, cross-service advice to the President, the SECDEF, and Congress, primarily on issues related to resource allocation. This was supposed to be resolved by making the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) the principal adviser on military matters, even in presenting any dissenting opinions from any of the other services. By design, this was supposed to be coordinated, consultative advice among the Joint Chiefs. Some have criticized this structure by expressing fear of creating a general staff.¹⁸ Others have noted that the CJCS would not take positions to threaten or challenge the parochial interest of any one service. Although these arguments appear to balance each other they reflect a need to bring about further reforms at that level.

The second reason was resource allocation. The process was focused on dollars and manpower for the different services instead of focusing on end capabilities. Invariably, the services work in an environment where they need more than they can get funded. Program objective memoranda are generated by the services with target objectives that by far exceed monetary outlay. With that in mind, the services will protect at all costs any and all core programs at the expense of any multi-service requirement. Additionally, combatant command review of these plans is hampered by a different perspective, normally of a short-term view, compared to the Joint Requirements Overview Council (JROC) process.

The third reason was the need to reduce staff duplication by removing from the service chiefs, non-military functions such as auditing and legislative affairs. In this very important aspect the U.S. military scored low, again. Common sense would dictate that that the process should include screening the different staff functions to eliminate redundancies and find the proper place for each one. The way this process was executed from the services to the secretariats was by changing organizational charts to reflect new bosses. The result was no efficiencies gained and functions moved inappropriately out of their proper locations. Some functions, like acquisition or research and development were moved to places within the secretariats with little or no functional expertise to support them. Compounding this problem, civilian senior leadership now had to select and process nominees through a Congressional confirmation process; this process hurt retention of people long enough to gain the expertise necessary to properly manage very complex functions.¹⁹

For example, our military's performance during Vietnam, the seizure of the USS Pueblo, the attack on the Mayaguez, the aborted Iran hostage rescue mission, the destruction of the

Marine Barracks in Beirut, and the Granada incursion revealed DOD's inability to plan and execute joint operations. The common denominators among these operations were poor advice to political leaders, lack of unity of command, and inability to operate jointly. Poor communications, lack of familiarity of procedures and equipment in operability, showcased problems in joint operations.²⁰

Additionally, absence of a strategic vision, inter-service conflict, poor coordination, and failures in the acquisition process were attributed to a deficient and bloated defense bureaucracy. Once again, Congress questioned the need for seemingly unnecessary staff layers and the expenditure of wasted resources. Moreover, ineffectiveness and rapid turnover of civilians, particularly political appointees in the Pentagon, were cited as flaws needing major repair. The final legislation focused on achieving jointness, but did not help the organizational difficulties within the military departments. The Goldwater-Nichols Act directed a fifteen percent cut in the DOD bureaucracy while force levels were cut by more than a third, although it did not mandate any structural changes.

INTER-SERVICE RIVALRY AND PAROCHIALISM

As someone who has devoted his entire life to the military, I am saddened by that the services are still unable to put national interest above parochial interest.

—Senator Barry Goldwater, 1985.²¹

Unfortunately, DOD seems to have lost momentum on reform initiatives. We have had a history of at least fifty -five years since the initial defense reforms that created DOD to show that there are still problems. The War on Terrorism and transformation issues across the services occupy DOD's focus for now. Indeed, there is still a clear need for DOD reform to improve transformation efforts, at a minimum, and overall warfighting capability. DOD change has not kept up with the demands of the new post-Cold War security environment. Ambiguous responsibilities among the military departments and OSD perpetuate a flawed environment where we appear to be more joint but where parochialism is alive and well.²² Whereas service competition could be viewed as healthy, to motivate keeping a sharp training edge, inter-service rivalry can be counterproductive and inefficient.

In the 1980s, inter-service rivalry and competition created an environment where the formulation of security strategy was not based in realistic estimates of available fiscal resources. The services could not agree on a fiscally constrained strategy where resources were applied based on commonly understood and agreed upon priorities. Systems interoperability was non-

existent and as it often happens we paid the price with American lives in a far away desert in Iran.

The new face of inter-service rivalry is lack of coordination for future combat systems. Recent transformation efforts have brought this issue to light. An example is the Stryker vehicle design for the Objective Force; designed to fit in a C-130 transport plane. It would appear that instead of designing and producing a vehicle in accordance with future combat requirements, the Army had one built that could fit in a C-130. Why, then, did we not make this a true joint effort by bringing in the Air Force into the planning? Could we have designed the combat vehicle we needed even if we required a new transport airplane? Would the Air Force build the aircraft needed to complement the objective force and its deployment requirements? We cannot afford to waste precious resources or time as we find ourselves fighting a new enemy- terrorism-that will take a long time to defeat at great expense to the nation.

A large organization like DOD consumes lots of resources, especially dollars. It also consumes talent, both civilian and military. The debate on how many layers of headquarters are needed is not new. Very few would argue that more layers of staff are good for the organization. The majority would accept that more layers of staff distance the senior leadership from the real issues, slows down actions, and increases micro-management. These problems are not unique to the U.S. defense establishment. An examination of the British experience with defense reorganization will help place the U.S. efforts in perspective.

BRITISH DEFENSE REORGANIZATION, A MODEL FOR REFORM

Trying to change the British Defence bureaucracy is as difficult as trying to perform an appendix operation on a man while he is carrying a grand piano upstairs.

—Denis Healy, Leader of Britain's Labor Party.²³

The British Military offers an interesting parallel to U.S. Defense reform efforts especially since the U.S. military hierarchy was modeled on the Joint Staff system that Britain used during WWII.²⁴ Although the British Military is not as large compared to the U.S., the lessons are important to note. The British path to defense reform is very similar to ours, but it took a long time to complete. In recent times, pressure to improve management of the bigger defense budgets Britain was asking of taxpayers became one of their reasons to act, a catalyst for change.²⁵ Additionally, a national disposition of scarce resources, an overwhelming need for jointness, and streamlined policy making and advice led to the elimination of service ministers, equal to our service secretaries, under a combined Ministry of State Staff. Changes were made

to balance power and influence among the ministries and the Ministry of Defence, to accommodate shifts in warfighting strategy and better utilize resources. As in the U.S. case British defense reorganization efforts started in earnest in the 1940s.

In 1940, Winston Churchill, as Minister of Defense, removed the individual service ministers from the War Cabinet. In spite of this move, the service ministers were able to bypass the Minister of Defense, received their own appropriations, and established their own strategies. Reminiscent of the U.S. experience, this establishment resulted in severe weaknesses in defense planning. Post war economic difficulties and competition for resources forced the British to change.²⁶

Duncan Sandy's White Paper on Defence Organization of 1958 argued for unification of the Armed Forces and a resulting reduction in the use of resources. The British created a Chief of Defence Staff, but as before, the service chiefs could bypass the Chief of Defence Staff and directly communicate with the Prime Minister. In 1963, Lord Louis Mountbatten, then the second Chief of Defence Staff, pushed for the elimination of the separate service ministers in a bold move that was far from popular within the British military. His initiatives elevated the post of Chief of Defense Staff to Secretary of State for Defence with service ministers reduced to ministers of state, reporting to the new secretary of state.²⁷ However, Mountbatten still had concerns about the services and pursued the goal of a single organization.

During 1967, the government forced further downgrades in the service ministries and in 1970 they were eliminated briefly; their return marked by significantly weaker powers. Also in 1970 the service chiefs were subordinated to the Chief of Defense Staff, the service ministers were dismissed and the British started a significant effort to privatize functions formerly performed by the military services. Contracting alone produced savings of 25 percent for the defense budget. Concurrently, senior posts were reduced and in 1984 the Ministry of Defence Organisational Review established the Chief of Defence Staff as the principal adviser to the Secretary of State for Defence for military operations and strategy.²⁸ Eventually, the British came to the realization that every time they conducted an operation they conducted it jointly; therefore, they should be organized in a manner that reflected this reality. Furthermore, resources did not allow for unnecessary parochialism. Although the British have kept their services, they are nowhere close to having the influence and power of the individual U.S. Armed Forces services. Without losing their particular service flavor, they have moved more of their functions to operational commands.²⁹

While the British experience is an interesting case study for comparison, the intent was not to portray it as the perfect solution, but as an example to consider. Differences in the

number of personnel, missions, equipment, and infrastructure make the U.S. case unique. However, we share some of the same dilemmas and the British experience should compel us to consider them closely to seek answers to our own organizational problems.

THE ELIMINATION OF THE SERVICE SECRETARIATS: THE NEXT STEP

The office of the Secretary of Defense is more than capable of exercising civilian control of the military...You could do away with the service secretaries tomorrow and no one would miss them

—Chuck Vinch, *Pacific Stars and Stripes*³⁰

This time of transformation can allow the nation to truly revolutionize our defense structure. Repeated calls for the elimination of the service secretariats, supported by the successful British experience, provide compelling evidence that change is sorely needed and possible. Military Service Chiefs of Staff could assume responsibility for most, if not all, service functions with little impact and potential for great savings. Senator Sam Nunn called for the elimination of the service secretariats by merging them in the military service departments when he said, “although counter-intuitive, DOD can manage better with fewer people.”³¹

Colonel Uldric Fiore wrote the following in a 1999 article, “these secretariats remain full blown, multi-layered bureaucracies with agendas as parochial as those of the service staffs.” The bureaucracies Fiore refers to are made up of 30,000 personnel in the Department of Defense. This very interesting article also calls for streamlining the management structure of the military departments by eliminating duplication, layering, and redundant operations and personnel. Fiore goes on to say that this would simplify the decision making process, provide clearer accountability for performance, and improve the efficiency of the policymaking machinery of the defense management.³²

The 1995 Report of the Commission on Roles and Missions found that having two staffs in the same headquarters (three in the case of the Navy) impedes integration of effort and causes friction in the headquarters as well as at higher and lower echelons. The commission concluded that departmental secretaries and service chiefs of staff would be better served by a single staff of experienced civilians and uniformed officers.³³ Additionally, almost every study since 1947 has recommended merging staffs.

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) emphasizes the need to revitalize the DOD establishment. It states that DOD has not kept pace with the changing national security environment. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld uses Chapter VI of the QDR to tell us that: “An infrastructure that needs to be streamlined to match the new reality, financial systems

that limit the ability to see and manage the enterprise, and processes that discourage action and reasonable risk at the working level are hallmarks of a mature enterprise that must be transformed.”³⁴

The next step for the United States should be to eliminate the service secretariats. The secretariats have proved to be duplicative in many respects. In General Order Number 3, dated 9 July 2002, Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White made the nominal move of designating the Assistant Chiefs of Staff in the Army staff as military advisors to the different Assistant Secretaries of the Army. Their task, with respect to this role is to assist the Assistant Secretaries of the Army in the performance of their responsibilities and provide advice and staff support required to enable effective and efficient administration of the Department of the Army and to represent Army interests and equities to the OSD and Joint Staff as required. However, this apparent merging of staffs has not produced any efficiencies or reduction of staffs and the jury is still out on whether this merging of staffs will survive personality conflicts and dissenting opinions, and contribute to increased effectiveness.

Elimination of the service secretariats could yield almost immediate savings in manpower and resources, which could easily be applied to operational units and combatant commands worldwide. DOD needs to find redundancy, eliminate it, or determine if those functions could be better served in the JCS or SECDEF staffs. The 2001 QDR, once again, called for streamlining and flattening the organization by reducing all headquarters staffs by fifteen percent and consolidating or differentiating overlapping functions between OSD and the services.³⁵

CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY, ARE THERE REASONS FOR CONCERN?

A poorly organized and inefficient military staff system has been one of the traditional supports of civilian control of the military in the United States. With the services competing with each other and unable to act collectively, their influence and power are automatically lessened. There ought to be a less costly way to maintain civilian control. At the same time, it is only realistic to recognize that if the role and effectiveness of the military staff are enhanced, the balance may need new adjustments.

—Report of The Defense Organization Project, 1985, p.184.³⁶

The subordination of the military to civilian authority is truly an American tradition since the early beginnings of our country. The United States Constitution granted to the Congress: “the power to declare war, to raise and support armies, to provide and maintain a navy; to make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces; to make all laws which

shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers...” It was written this way since our republic was founded on a militia army made up of civilians and raised for the express purpose of handling emergencies. The President is the Commander in Chief over an Army of the people subordinated to elected officials. As a nation, we are not concerned about the military establishment getting involved in politics or perhaps plotting a coup. This quality of the U.S. Armed Forces is one of the aspects of our service to the nation culture that is envied throughout the world.

However, over the Cold War years the secretariats expanded the numbers of civilian appointed officials in an unprecedented manner with Congressional acquiescence. For example, SECDEF Robert S. McNamara wanted control by analysis of all military matters with numerous checks and counterchecks. Bigger secretariat staffs brought more access and influence to Congress and made it easier to burden DOD with hundreds of reporting requirements.³⁷

Opponents of defense reform, concerned about loss of civilian control or supervision need to remember that sheer numbers of civilians in the defense establishment is not the standard of measure. Others argue that the secretariats provide a necessary layer of civilian control, often confusing control with supremacy.³⁸ The U.S. Armed Forces serve under a chain of command that includes the Secretary of Defense and the President of the United States.

We have seen past presidential administrations take years in filling every political appointee post in the Pentagon; however, that is the choice of the executive branch, not the uniformed military. Consolidation at the OSD level could simplify the process and move the nation away from organizationally weak civilian secretariats in temporary and nominal charge of organizations that otherwise run well already. In any event, the typical tour length for a politically appointed civilian in the Pentagon is about nineteen months. The corresponding loss of experience and additional personnel turbulence, exacerbates the situation, no less complicated by the military’s own personnel rotation policies. To allay the fears of those afraid of the emergence of a military state and to restate the tradition of military subordination to civilian supremacy, President Truman wrote the following to Congress in 1945: “There is no basis for... fear [of militarism] as long as the traditional policy of the United States is followed that a civilian, subject to the President, the Congress, and the will of the people, be placed at the head of the [Defense] department.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Understanding the radical concept proposed in this paper, a gradual change would be the best option. There are no expectations of an overnight shift, announcing the total and irrevocable elimination of the secretariat staffs. An orderly transfer of functions is possible, screening all tasks to determine whether they belong in OSD, JCS or the military departments.

Some observers, like Uldric Fiore, have proposed a merging of staffs instead of outright elimination. However, we must be careful when we say that merging staffs will yield the efficiency and effectiveness everyone expects. The military departments could keep those functions that are managerial in nature with OSD and JCS focusing on strategy and policy issues. The military departments can still provide the service specific expertise and input while they ensure properly trained and ready forces. Otherwise, combatant commands can focus on training and the particular demands of operations and contingency plans relevant to their areas of operation and responsibility. Further streamlining is possible where functions could be eliminated, transferred to other agencies, or contracted out as demonstrated by the British experience.

CONCLUSION

Sentiment must give way to common sense.

—George Marshall³⁹

Change is possible and needed. Understandably, any large organization such as DOD will resist change. General Anthony Zinni, USMC, (Retired), said that change of the magnitude needed “will be difficult as it will be resisted by vested elements.” His concerns about politics, bureaucracy and reactionary thinking limiting our ability to benefit from real change, that is necessary, are well founded. In his 2001 Hofmeier lecture to the Joint Forces Staff College, General Zinni stressed the need for real, transformational change that results from a hard, honest look at all aspects of the military and other supporting agencies. Real jointness must not be confused with mere interoperability. Jointness involves integration, changes in organization, structure, core competencies and operational concepts.

James R. Locher, a recognized expert in defense reorganization, as recently as 2001, called attention to the dual headquarters structure, at the top of each of the military departments. He proposes that they be combined into one. The current arrangement is far too inefficient for a fast-paced world, and it consumes far too much manpower. There is still much to

do. In spite of the gains that accrued to the Goldwater-Nichols Act, DOD organizational problems remain.

True reform must include streamlining our defense structure. The history of defense reform is replete with studies and legislation, which continually identified the need to streamline the bureaucracy, eliminate unnecessary layers of staff, and reduce duplication of effort. The reformers of the mid-eighties, determined to bring about meaningful change, found there was plenty of evidence and study to support reorganization.

The road ahead must include the elimination of the service secretariats along with significant functional analysis to determine the appropriate distribution and assignment of tasks. How can we possibly talk about transformation, when we fail to recognize that senior DOD leadership should lead the charge? How long can we, as an institution, ignore mandated staff reductions? Any large organization will resist change, especially if there is no real outside pressure to do so. That reality, coupled with the additional burden of political appointments, will make change difficult and unlikely to come from within.

We have an opportunity for true reform, which should not be stymied by organizational inertia and parochialism. Our Commander in Chief has a unique opportunity, since the last mid-term elections, with a Republican Congress, to pass legislation to achieve defense reform. We also have a Secretary of Defense who is not afraid to tackle change. The time to act is now. The new face of war, the new enemy, international terrorism, demand a defense structure that is agile, efficient, and fully capable of operating in the inter-agency environment. Our warriors expect the best we can give and our nation deserves no less.

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ENDNOTES

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- ³ Barrett, XXIV.
- ⁴ James R. Locher, III, "Has it Worked?, The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act, Naval War College Review, (Autumn 2001); available from <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/review/2001/Autumn/art5-au1.htm>; Internet; accessed 17 September 2002.
- ⁵ Uldric L. Fiore, Jr., "Defense Secretariat Reform," Joint Forces Quarterly, (Autumn/Winter 1999-2000): 76-82.
- ⁶ Michael B. Donley, "Prospects for the Military Departments," Joint Forces Quarterly, (Autumn 1996): 58-62.
- ⁷ Kenneth M. Crowe, Goldwater-Nichols Act: Time for Reform, Strategy Research project (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 10 April 2000), 3.
- ⁸ James R. Locher, III, "Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols" Joint Forces Quarterly, (Autumn 1996): 13.
- ⁹ Ronald Jacobs, Jr., Unification of the Armed Forces, (Fort Leavenworth, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Thesis, 7 June 1997), 17.
- ¹⁰ Janice M. Hamby, Hector E. Pagan, David L. Richards, Next Steps in Defense Reorganization, Ideas for the 21st Century, Joint and Combined Warfighting School Paper (Joint Forces Staff College, 31 August 2001), 3.
- ¹¹ Barret, XXIV.
- ¹² Hamby, 3.
- ¹³ James R. Locher, "Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols", Joint Forces Quarterly, (Autumn 1996):10.
- ¹⁴ Dennis J. Quinn, ed. The Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act, A ten Year Retrospective, (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1999), 13.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 – 12.
- ¹⁶ Christopher M. Bourne, "Unintended Consequences of the Goldwater-Nichols Act," Joint Forces Quarterly, (Spring 1988): 99-108.
- ¹⁷ Fiore, 79.

¹⁸ Robert Previdi, "Goldwater-Nichols: Where Have Ten Years Taken Us?" United States Naval Institute Proceedings (May 1997): 14-16.

¹⁹ Hamby, 5 – 7.

²⁰ Locher, Has it worked?, The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act.

²¹ Quinn, 12.

²² Sam Nunn, "Future Trends in Defense Organization," Joint Forces Quarterly, (Autumn 1996): 63-66.

²³ Gerald F. Seib, "Overhaul the Military Chain of Command," The Wall Street Journal, 14 August 1984. available from <http://proquest.umi.com/pdqweb>; Internet: accessed 17 September 2002.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Hamby, 16.

²⁷ Ibid., 16 – 17.

²⁸ Ibid., 17.

²⁹ Colonel Mark Spicer, Deputy Defence Attache, Presentation to Joint Forces Staff College Class 01-3S, British Embassy, Washington, D.C., 9 August 2001.

³⁰ Fiore, 79.

³¹ Nunn, 63 – 66.

³² Fiore, 80.

³³ Donley, 59 – 60.

³⁴ Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Quadrennial Defense Review, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, September 2001), 49.

³⁵ Ibid., 52.

³⁶ Hamby, 23.

³⁷ Fiore, 79 – 80.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Quinn, 48.

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