The Interagency Cometh: Is the National Security System of 1947 Capable of Handling the Challenges of 2009?

A Monograph
by
Major Robert D. Halvorson
United States Army

School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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14. ABSTRACT

Despite the complexity of the Contemporary Operating Environment, the United States is still wedded to a national security system created in 1947. The United States places itself in jeopardy by using a system created at the end of World War II for a world where state actors were the primary threat, with the Soviet Union, the Cold War, and nuclear deterrence taking center stage. The National Security Council (NSC) is no longer capable of efficiency. The advisory body created by congress and President Truman has been overcome in recent years by the complex environment evolving from the end of the Cold War. The NSC's efficiency began to falter in Vietnam, and its failed policies have resulted in numerous interagency failures throughout the last 40 years. Compounding the issues at the national policy planning level is the current regional policy execution system. The United States has militarized its foreign policy. It has done so out of circumstance vice design. The evolution of the Department of Defense since 1949 has led it to create Geographic Combatant Commands, which are staffed and capable of regional policy execution. Recent inclusion of other agency personnel into the commands to enable them to plan in an "interagency" fashion has given them even more capability to act as the regional foreign policy arm of the United States. Adding to this militarization of policy execution is the lack of regional capability within the Department of State. The evolution of the State Department has led it to create an ambassador-centric organization, which engages single countries in diplomacy instead of approaching diplomacy regionally. Without a systemic change at national and regional levels, the United States runs the risk of improperly identifying future problems, and creating policy that when implemented may exacerbate global tensions.

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This monograph was defended by the degree candidate on 31 March 2009 and approved by the monograph director and reader named below.

Approved by:

_____ Monograph Director
Thomas Hollis, COL, IN

_____ Monograph Reader
Thomas Bruscino Jr., Ph.D.

_____ Director,
Stefan J. Banach, COL, IN   School of Advanced
Military Studies

_____ Director,
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.   Graduate Degree
Programs

Abstract

The Interagency Cometh: Is the National Security System of 1947 Capable of Handling the Challenges of 2009? by Major Robert D. Halvorson, United States Army, 49 pages.

Despite the complexity of the Contemporary Operating Environment, the United States is still wedded to a national security system created in 1947. The United States places itself in jeopardy by using a system created at the end of World War II for a world where state actors were the primary threat, with the Soviet Union, the Cold War, and nuclear deterrence taking center stage.

The National Security Council (NSC) is no longer capable of efficiency. The advisory body created by congress and President Truman has been overcome in recent years by the complex environment evolving from the end of the Cold War. The NSC's efficiency began to falter in Vietnam, and its failed policies have resulted in numerous interagency failures throughout the last 40 years.

Compounding the issues at the national policy planning level is the current regional policy execution system. The United States has militarized its foreign policy. It has done so out of circumstance vice design. The evolution of the Department of Defense since 1949 has led it to create Geographic Combatant Commands, which are staffed and capable of regional policy execution. Recent inclusion of other agency personnel into the commands to enable them to plan in an "interagency" fashion has given them even more capability to act as the regional foreign policy arm of the United States. Adding to this militarization of policy execution is the lack of regional capability within the Department of State. The evolution of the State Department has led it to create an ambassador-centric organization, which engages single countries in diplomacy instead of approaching diplomacy regionally. Without a systemic change at national and regional levels, the United States runs the risk of improperly identifying future problems, and creating policy that when implemented may exacerbate global tensions.

This monograph recommends changes to the national and regional policy planning and implementation systems. While changes at the national level may bring little change, the creation of a regional interagency command organization has the potential to streamline regional policy execution. Bringing together ideas from the Project on National Security Reform and the President of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, systemic changes are recommended in both the NSC and the Geographic Combatant Commands.

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Introduction

The recent militarization of the foreign policy of the United States is at its zenith. It is time for the military to get back to focusing on its core tasks. The world in which the United States Government finds itself today is complex, interconnected, and unpredictable. The challenges that face the United States in the next ten years pale in comparison to those of the last decade, let alone the challenges it faced at the end of the 1940s. Despite this stark reality, the United States Government continues to rely on a national security apparatus created at the end of World War II. Despite continual tweaking over the past 60 years, the national security system has been overcome by evolving threats and may no longer be capable of efficiently and effectively creating and executing coordinated national security policy. While recent writings overlook the successes of the national security system, authors bring the systemic failures to the fore of the conversation: Vietnam, the Iranian hostage crisis and the ensuing Iran-Contra Affair, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, 9/11, Iraq, and the rise of fundamentalist religious groups. Adding to the arsenal for groups like The Project on National Security Reform (PNSR), a nonpartisan group funded by the United States Congress, are the myriad challenges that continue to stack up in front of United States policy makers and executors. While the United States Army defines these challenges in the world today as the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE), these same issues are mentioned throughout government manuals, speeches, and directives: globalization, the growing young and poor, the mass migration to urban centers on the coastline, climate change, and once again the list goes on.

Simply put, the world was different in 1947. The executives and operational commanders faced myriad challenges in 1947. The problem is the leaders in power today continue to use the same methodology in facing a completely new set of challenges in 2009 in addition to the old ones. The question then is how is the United States to go about the process of adapting its national security structure to be relevant today and ready tomorrow? Should it change at all, or is

the status quo good enough? There are many opinions floated by scholars, politicians, and military professionals alike about ways to institute change that will enable the United States to properly manage the ill-structured problems facing the world today. This monograph will focus on changes recommended in two major areas.

The National Security Council

First, the National Security Council (NSC) is the seat of interagency planning and coordination in the United States national security system. There have been many studies on the NSC and its roles and responsibilities. The newest of these is the Project on National Security Reform, which Congress tasked to identify and recommend comprehensive changes to the national security structure. Their recommendations are broad and sweeping, and will most likely have to be implemented sequentially over time, however their recommendations for changes to the NSC could fall on receptive ears with a new administration at the helm of United States policy formulation. Likewise, the recommendations of the President of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, Dr Richard Downie may take hold in a new administration. While Dr. Downie primarily recommends changes for the command and control structures of the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC), he also recommends sweeping changes to the structure of the NSC. Combining the recommendations of scholars like Dr. Downie and the PNSR, it becomes apparent how the evolving nature of the operating environment demands a new and more responsive NSC. Despite the changes in the world today, the NSC remains relatively unchanged. In order to rectify this situation, the National Security Advisor (NSA) must be empowered to be an executive and a superior among peers in the executive branch of government. An empowered NSA allows the President to focus on long term, strategic vision, without getting involved in the minutia and infighting often occurring in the NSC. Some argue that an empowered NSA gives the National Security Council too much unchecked power to plan and even execute policy. To counter this, the NSA should be congressionally vetted and

approved. Instead of the current system where the NSA is a personal assistant to the President, the NSA must answer to congress (as opposed to the current structure, which keeps the NSA from congressional testimony). By empowering the NSA to a position above the myriad agencies (Department of State, Defense, Treasury, etc), and making the position congressionally vetted, the NSC will gain the ability to produce coordinated policy in a quicker more reliable fashion. This step will not solve the overarching issues within the national security system in itself. Unfortunately, no matter what changes are made to the NSC, it will continue to be a political body, and will be bound with bureaucracy. It is thus necessary to build and empower a regional policy execution system that is capable of planning and executing policy, despite the shortfalls of the national system. Steps within congress, budgeting, and in the regional policy execution systems must accompany a change to the NSC.

Regional and Operational Policy Execution

Second, is a focus on the regional and operational command and control organizations the national security system relies on to execute strategic policy. While the National Security Council is supposed to be the bedrock of strategic national security policy, the execution of these policies is trusted to the different agencies of government. These agencies each have their own unique way of planning, organizing, and coordinating. These various agencies' views differ as widely as their roles, with the resulting geographic boundaries being incongruent between agencies. Dr. Richard Downie's unpublished work on Regional Civilian Led Interagency Organizations (RCLIO) provides a fresh idea about reinvigorating the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) by installing what he sees as the appropriate civil-military relationship in a regional command system. His ideas, while they may be controversial to some in the military on a first read, may find resonance in a new administration that is attempting to find new ways to change the image of the United States in the world. Major Brett Sylvia echoes Dr. Downie's findings and recommendations in his monograph on *Empowering Interagency Capabilities*. He concluded that

the current regional and operational command structure between the Department of State and the Department of Defense are inadequate given the changes in the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE).[1] Adding to the impetus to change the regional interagency capabilities are the GCCs themselves. In conducting operations, GCCs have come to the realization that the military does not have the internal human capital to properly execute the strategic policies of the national command system.[2] The United States Southern Command, responsible for Department of Defense planning, coordination, and operations in Central America, South America and its waters, formed its Joint Interagency Task Force South to enable it to conduct coordinated illicit trafficking operations.[3] The creation and organization of United States Africa Command, billed as the first truly interagency Geographic Combatant Command, includes significant staff positions from other agencies of government, to include a Deputy Commander for Civil-Military Relations, Ambassador Mary Carlin Yates.[4] These two GCCs are leading the effort in interagency change. They may not be aware of the long-term effects of these changes however. As time goes on and these commands are staffed with personnel from other agencies a question slowly creeps into view. Is it appropriate for a Department of Defense command to have control over personnel and regional policy planning and execution coming from multiple sectors of the United States government? The question of proper civil-military relations may spell the end to the Geographic Combatant Commands as we know them today. The operating environment faced by the GCCs demands the integration of other agencies into planning and execution. The changes installed by

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[1] Brett G Sylvia, *Empowering Interagency Capabilities: A Regional Approach,* (School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2006).

[2] Richard Downie, *Reforming US Foreign Policy Implementation: Creating a Global System of Regional Civilian Led Interagency Organizations*, (Unpublished, April 2008), 7.

[3] Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South, *Mission*, http://jiatfs.southcom.mil/cg/mission.htm, (accessed December 3, 2008).

[4] Lauren Ploch, CRS Report for Congress, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interest and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*, March 10, 2008.

United States Southern Command and Africa Command are the next evolution in interagency integration. What is necessary now, is the realization on the part of the Department of Defense and the United States government that these changes will spell the end of the current regional policy execution system as we know it. The continued integration of other agency personnel into the GCCs, and current plans to align the boundaries of the regional bureaus and commands will create a tension to be resolved at the highest levels of government. The final product of these changes will look something akin to the proposal laid out by Dr. Downie. The age of the Regional Civilian Led Interagency Organization is dawning. The Department of Defense must capitalize on the impending changes and place itself in a position of relevance for the future.

Scope

There are concerns over the inability of the national government to properly interact with state and local agencies within the United States, however this subject is more concerned with what is now being coined as homeland security policy and execution. This monograph will focus solely on external policy and the *national* security system. While homeland security continues to integrate with the national security system, at this time it remains a separate government agency and planning body. Much like the Department of Homeland Security, the other departments of government have their own internal policies and procedures that either assist or hinder the interagency process. Each department provides enough friction to the process as to warrant their own investigation; however, those investigations would be too lengthy to cover in proper detail here. While the overall culture of these organizations and their tendencies are discussed, the background and internal workings that create these cultures will not. A common theme throughout investigating interagency failures and the changes necessary to remedy them is that the United States Congress supports the separation and hierarchical parochialism of the

departments through its own structure of committees and funding procedures.[5] Once again, the role congress plays in sustaining a culture of competition for resources within the interagency process is not within the confines of this research. The focus of the research intended to address the issues generated by congressional actions and structures, but the content was too broad to be contained within this monograph. While both of the sections have a depth in themselves, the use of a singularly focused lens is what has caused a non-integrated system of government today. The ill-structured problems that face the United States are not solved by using one approach or department in government and it would be unwise to approach the interagency discussion by focusing on one area alone. While this causes the depth of each subject to be less than a singular study, it provides an overall assessment of the situation over a much more stable base of information and analysis. Just as a single country study might provide in depth analysis of social structures inherent in that one country, it does not allow a more diverse study of human society.

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[5] U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services Panel on Roles and Missions, *Initial Perspectives*, January 2008.

> It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who would profit by the old order and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order.[6]

> - Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*

The National Security Council's Role

The words penned by Machiavelli still ring true over four-hundred years after their publishing. While he warned about the challenges facing a prince in his exercise of authority in the 1500s, those who are recommending changes to the National Security Council face a system that is entrenched as well as any aristocracy of Machiavelli's day. In discussing the National Security Council, it is important to understand its beginnings and the historical impetus regarding its creation. From there, the discussion can then move on to the ways in which modern reformers believe that the National Security Council must change to meet the challenges presented to the United States in a post cold war world. The National Security Council has been managed to varying degrees of success in the last sixty years, but even with its failures, the fact that it has been retained as a system of interagency management has given it bureaucratic mass and familiarity, and thus staying power.

History of the National Security Council

In 1947, as the dust settled around Europe and the Pacific, the United States was positioned to be dominant in the world. As it recovered, its military began to review what had happened since 1939, and Congress was determined to ensure that the failures contributing to the

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[6] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses* (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), 21.

disaster at Pearl Harbor to could not reoccur.[7] Congress' attempts to create a system to integrate

the different departments of the executive branch did not start after the Second World War.

Congress attempted to consolidate or reorganize the executive branch of the United States in the

early 1920s.[8] After the style of leadership seen in Roosevelt, many in Washington did not want a

recurrence of his seemingly incoherent form of Presidential policy making during the war.

Congress observed what they believed to be secretive and sometimes confusing foreign policy

planning and implementation. Some blamed the foreign policy of Roosevelt as the impetus for the

attack on Pearl Harbor, forcing the hand of the Japanese due to conflicting policies in the

Pacific.[9] Many in the Congress supported the desire for an organized policy planning system that

integrated all departments of the United States government.

While there was a move to create an interagency system at the highest level in

Washington, the United States Army also had a plan to consolidate the armed forces. In response

to the Army's plan to create a United States Department of Defense (DOD) in 1945, the United

States Navy submitted the Eberstadt Report which called instead for the creation of the NSC.[10]

Truman was not opposed to the creation of a system that would assist in the coordination of

policy as long as the council did not have the ability to create policy without decision-making

power from the President. Truman's reluctance initially created the National Security Council

purely as an advisory group without any operational authority. With the Eberstadt Report's

recommendations and a compromise reached between the Army and the Navy, President Truman

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[7] Alan Whitaker, Frederick Smith, and Elizabeth McKune, *The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System*, (Washington D.C., National Defense University, November 2008), 6.

[8] Ibid, 7

[9] Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1995) 117, 147-157, 239-242

[10] Charles Stevenson, "Underlying Assumptions of the National Security Act of 1947," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 1st QTR 2008, 130

submitted to Congress what would become the National Security Act of 1947.[11] Although created

with only "general direction" authority over the three branches of the military (the United States

Army, Navy, and Air force), the 1947 act created the position of Secretary of Defense. At the

same time, the NSC came into being, creating the first major change in the structure of the

executive branch of government since 1798.[12]

Since the National Security Act of 1947 and the amendments in 1949 which created the

DOD that the Army had lobbied for from 1945-1947, the NSC has not seen significant *structural*

change until the recent creation of the Director of National Intelligence in the Intelligence Reform

and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. Since 1949, the NSC's statutory members have been the

President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense. The Chairman

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the statutory military advisor to the council, while the Director of

the Central Intelligence Agency was the intelligence advisor. With the 2004 act, the Director of

National Intelligence became the council's intelligence advisor. The Energy Independence and

Security Act of 2007 added the Secretary of Energy as a statutory member.[13] While the National

Security Council envisioned by Congress, one that exercises national security planning and

operational control, did not come to pass, the advisory body approved by Truman has remained

largely unchanged. Paradoxically, a continual change in the way in which the President views the

council has remained the most stable feature of the NSC. Presidents would use the council in

whatever fashion they deemed necessary. While some, like Eisenhower and Nixon favored a

centralized and military like structure, involving the National Security Council in decision

making and policy work, other presidents found its structure too rigid and the meetings too full of

turf battles and power squabbles. These presidents, like Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter preferred

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[11] Ibid, 129-131

[12] Ibid, 131

[13] Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, 73

to hold informal meetings outside of the NSC chambers, sometimes holding court with personal advisors rather than with the primaries.[14] While the flexibility of the National Security Council may be one of its greatest features, potentially allowing presidents to guide how policy is researched, formulated, coordinated, and executed, it is this same flexibility that has been seen as a major flaw in the eyes of its recent detractors.

Congress created the National Security Council for the Cold War. While critics argue that there have been multiple hiccups in the policy creation and execution from 1949 through the fall of the Soviet Union, one could also argue that in a macro sense, the National Security Council was successful in its planning of national policy. The United States still exists, the world did not fall to communism in the sense feared after World War II, and the United States is arguably the sole super power in the world (though there are nations on the rise).

Is the National Security Council Relevant?

There are many opinions on how the National Security Council must change in order to effectively and efficiently manage the grave and ill-structured problems facing the United States today. The question seems to have become *how* the council should change. Given the relatively unchanged and long history of the NSC and the fact that the United States continues to exist today, is possibly testament to the council's capabilities as the lead agency in the national security system. Survival, if a measure of effectiveness, is one that is immeasurable until after the fact. If the nation survives, there is no reason to adjust the policies surrounding the system evaluated. However, if you do not survive, then there is nothing left to modify. The national security system with the NSC at its helm cannot be measured using survival as criteria of success. Thus, there are different measures to judge the way in which policy is created, versus the outcomes of the policy itself. In fact, both must be evaluated. To separate the ways from the ends would be fallacious in

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[14] Ibid, 8-11

retrospect and would overlook the sometimes unscrupulous behind the scenes politics for the

perceived gain. There are certainly more than a handful of schools of thought on the best way to

establish the National Security Council, and to date the United States every President modified its

structure in some fashion.[15] With this in mind, the United States must look past the simplistic

measure of survival and evaluate how efficiently the NSC conducts business.

Problems with the National Security Council

> According to the PNSR:
> "The U.S. position of world leadership, our country's prosperity and priceless freedoms,
> and the safety of our people are challenged not only by a profusion of new and
> unpredictable threats, but by the now undeniable fact that the national security system of
> the United States is increasingly misaligned with a rapidly changing global security
> environment."[16]

Chaired by a host of national policy experts and led by James R. Locher III, one of the prime

participants in the creation of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reform Act of 1986, the PNSR has

taken issue with many aspects of the current national security system. Its committee members

include John McLaughlin, Wes Clark, Brent Scowcroft, and Joseph Nye Jr. After almost a two-

year review of the national security system and its components, the PNSR published its findings

in November 2008. The PNSR seemed to time the release of these findings, while still within the

Bush administration's time, to facilitate its presentation to the incoming administration after the

2008 elections. While the Project's findings and recommendations summarize the laundry list of

problems with the national security system, it is not the only body investigating how the National

Security Council may need to be reformed. Congress, military professionals and national security

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[15] David Rothkopf, *Running the World*, (New York, Perseus Books Group 2005), 8-13. Rothkopf
points out that there has not been a single President that has left the NSC exactly as he found it.

[16] Project on National Security Reform, *Forging a New Shield* (Washington D.C., Center for the
Study of the President, 2008), i. The PNSR is a non-partisan commission that has conducted a major study
over the past three years in order to determine if the national security system is still viable. Manned with an
"A-list" team of policy experts, historians, and professionals, the project has produced a preliminary study,
a 700 page compilation of case studies, and an extensive 800 page final report. The web page for the
project can be found at: http://www.pnsr.org/.

experts are all jumping on the reform bus, and their list of shortcomings may foreshadow a significant change in the national security system.

Consider an organization. It has an executive with complete authority and responsibility. This organization has sub-departments responsible for the myriad things that the company does. At the same time, it has a staff of planning executives that are responsible for creating the guiding principles and policies that will be disseminated to the sub-departments for execution. If a CEO had to create an organization with this hierarchical structure, one way to do it would be to find the best personnel to fill the positions as deemed by the qualifications necessary to perform the position to an acceptable fashion. Moreover, the executive would want some form of control over who filled these positions to ensure that the personnel were right for the job. Following from this, an executive would want executives of skill and technical expertise to fill the sub-departments of their organization. Likewise, the executive would want trained and technically proficient personnel to fill the positions of the planning staff that would assist him in the strategic policy to be designed for the betterment of the organization as a whole. Once the structure was in place, the planners would work with the executive to create policy while the sub-department executives focused on the execution of that policy.

While there are multiple ways to create this kind of organization (given that some form of hierarchy is required), this example is not how the President manages the NSC. The President has a National Security Advisor (NSA), a security policy expert, but the statutory definition of the position is not one of an executive, but is an advisor. President Truman ensured that the role of the NSC and the advisor was not one that could execute or formulate policy without direct approval from the President.[17] To add to the confusion, the NSC consists of "Primaries" who are also the heads of the departments of government. While at first, there is some sense in this structure, since the heads of the departments (Defense, State, Energy, and National Intelligence)

are lead authorities in their fields, on further review this representation of departments on the policy making Primary staff begins to erode the very interagency environment that congress was attempting to create in 1947. This was evident from the beginning when President Truman had little use for the council since he viewed it as a place where the department heads came to wage turf battles instead of working together to formulate an integrated policy.[18] Whether it was the initial council under Truman, the struggle between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbiginew Brzezinski, or the most recent conflicts between Secretary of State Collin Powell and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the National Security Council has at times been a place for policy to come to die under the feet of the massive personalities in the room.[19] An NSC staff member once said something to the effect that the easiest outcome to produce in the interagency process is to prevent policy from being made.[20]

When the NSC creates policy, it tends to be a policy of consensus, not of agreement. In order to come to some form of consensus on a subject, deputies come up with diplomatic solutions to disagreements of department heads and the department stances become watered down, while individually they may have produced a more significant effect.[21] In turn, the policies produced are sometimes little more than ambiguous political public statements.[22] Having the heads of the departments of government as the leads in policy formation as well as execution forces them to balance the responsibility of creating truly integrated and coordinated interagency

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[17] Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, 7.

[18] Ibid. Truman paid little attention to the NSC once it was created and saw it as a place to be avoided since little was actually accomplished there. The continual infighting and argument over responsibilities and lead agencies left a bad taste in Truman's mouth and he would have none of it. He quickly changed his tune however when the war in Korea began.

[19] Rothkopf, 168, 212-213.

[20] Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, 29.

[21] PNSR Preliminary Findings, *Ensuring Security in an Unpredictable World*, 2008, 31-34.

[22] Christopher Lamb and Michael Bell, "What the Troops Need: 1947 National Security Act Tangled in Politics, Turf Fights", *Defense News*, Vol22, Issue15, 37 .

policy and the responsibility of leading a ponderous bureaucratic department that carries with it a defensive culture. By necessity, the department heads must protect their respective organizations in order to maintain it to the degree that it can fulfill its responsibilities within the national security system. Whether this means fighting for budget increases (or defending against cuts), gaining the status as lead-agency in a policy committee or operation, or defining administration policies that effect the departments, the secretaries of the departments have a responsibility to the department that they are assigned to. While the maintenance of a department does not necessarily conflict with the interagency process, if history is any indicator, it certainly does not lend to a smooth process, and at times can derail policy all together, and as can be exemplified by the recent conflicts between Collin Powell and Donald Rumsfeld, personality is everything.

According to the PNSR, "Leadership is about providing incentives to overcome barriers to effective action, particularly across departments and agencies."[23] This simple statement would indeed be simple in practice if other people with diverging personalities were not involved in the leadership process. President Jimmy Carter certainly found difficulties in overcoming the personality and professional differences between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbignew Brzezinski.[24] In a system where execution of policy is "stove-piped" into different government agencies, people trade information and thus power on a basis of personal interactions and individual personalities.[25] Personality, when compounded with the problem of dual-hatting the department heads, creates a system that is filled with friction. Madeleine Albright explained the frustration when she said that the only time the NSC and the State Department worked well together was when they were both controlled by Henry

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[23] PNSR Preliminary Findings, 15.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid, 86.

Kissinger.[26] The point being that personality matters in a system where there is no first among equals. The heads of the departments of government create policy with no over-arching authority except for the president. Issues of personal agenda are compounded when the deputies are involved and more so when the Policy Planning Committees become involved at the ground level of policy coordination. The NSA has no true statutory authority over the department heads. He cannot be the arbiter of policy except to provide the President's general guidance. Unless he is a diplomat of the highest caliber, a coordinated and meaningful strategic policy is difficult to accomplish as he tries to overcome some of the largest personalities in America. If he is unable to do so, then the President must step in and do the job.

Unless, as seen in the Nixon administration, the President has made clear that the NSA has an authoritative role, the President is the only authority figure who can overcome the preceding problems. It is obvious however that the President's involvement in overcoming deficiencies in the interagency system is not only unwanted, but is a misuse of his time when a systemic change in the way the NSC is structured may produce the same effect. Additionally, the President and the White House staff become overburdened dealing with the personality and departmental clashes, and the other interagency inadequacies.[27] This can result in a number of undesirable outcomes. In the case of the Reagan administration, the bottleneck in the National Security Council along with interference from Congress caused an informal structure to emerge from the NSC planning committees. Congress and a presidential commission scrutinized this informal organization. The Iran-Contra Affair became the albatross around Reagan's neck. Reagan was certainly not the first President to encounter the informal process at work in the National Security Council. Many Presidents have engaged in backroom meetings, lunches or in

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26 Ibid, 39.

27 Ibid, 45.

President Lyndon Johnson's case a meeting in the pool, while skinny-dipping.[28] While it is certainly the prerogative of the President to have informal meetings outside of the National Security Council, this short-circuits the need for the NSC. Congress created the National Security Council in order to overcome the perceived idiosyncrasies of a wartime President who was secretive and at times befuddling in his policy decisions.[29] By circumventing the system emplaced by Congress, the President devalues the council and returns the administration practices to a pre 1947 world. With the multifaceted international and domestic issues the President has to contend with on a daily basis, it is becoming increasingly necessary to enable the national security apparatus to do its job. If Presidents do not use the NSC, then those calling for a time of congressionally mandated change have a very valid point.

While the list of deficiencies that critics find within the National Security Council seems to be long indeed, generally they all attempt to make the case that the council, as created in 1947, has outlived its usefulness. Born as a system to bring structure to strategic policy creation in an age where threats were contained to nation states, and one nation state in particular, the one argument that those who call for reform point to is the increasingly complicated problems to be faced by the national security system. Even the newest military manuals emphasize the changing environment and the increasingly complicated world that it faces. The short list of trends identified in Army Field Manual 3-0 include globalization, the increase in technology, population growth (especially in the third world), the movement of this population into urban centers near bodies of water and the increased demand for scarce resources this will bring about, weapons proliferation, and the possibility of failed and failing states.[30] Authors repeat themselves in article after article addressing the need for interagency reform from the PNSR's multiple case studies

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[28] Nation Master, "Encyclopedia of President Lyndon B. Johnson", http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/President-Lyndon_B_Johnson (accessed January 21, 2009).

[29] Stevenson, 130.

and reports, to congressional orations and articles penned by national security experts throughout the field.

In 1950, it was acceptable to create a policy and trust that one of the big three agencies could handle the problem. If said agency was incapable, one of the others would take over at a designated time and location. When military might did not work, it was expected that diplomacy could, and never the two shall meet, with the exception of across the table at the NSC, and do not bother asking what the Central Intelligence Agency was doing. While there were simultaneous operations happening throughout the globe involving multiple agencies of the United States government, they were doing so in isolation of each other. The stovepipes created in 1947 were running at peak efficiency and were relied upon to conduct their business as instructed from the NSC. With few exceptions, the agencies did not reach out to each other at the operational level. One exception might be the implementation of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support teams (CORDS) created in 1967 as an attempt to recover from failed strategic and operational policy implementation during the Vietnam War.[31] There are other examples of strategic policy gaining a focal point, but these were arguably the result of a larger set of failed policies resulting in war at some level. The list includes Korea, Berlin, the Iran Hostage Crisis, Panama, Haiti, and Somalia among many others. When the 1947 national security system is forced to work on a singular focal point, it is effective if not efficient. The issue at hand today is a vast array of threats challenging the NSC on a daily basis, requiring a true interagency planning system unhindered by its current flaws. Congressman Geoff Davis summed it up when he said, at a Reserve Officers of America meeting in May of 2008, that the United States created an interagency system at a time when major combat operations from a peer competitor and

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[30] Headquarters Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0, 1-1.

[31] A.J. Langguth, *Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 441-442.

nuclear deterrence were the threats to the nation. He went on to say, with this threat there was little need for coordination between hierarchical departments of government.[32]

The legislative and executive actions involved in the creation of the National Security Act of 1947, seem to have been a conscious decision to create another set of checks and balances. Those involved created a system that requires consensus between multiple, culturally opposed agencies, with no authoritative arbiter. In contrast, James Locher points out, the threats facing the United States today run the gambit from traditional peer competitors to global terrorism, internet hacks, challenges to the nation's dominance in space, transnational religious leaders, and failing states. Even nation states whose actions used to be somewhat predictable given alliances and trade regularities, he continues in an article, have become difficult to predict now that the end of the cold war has dissipated many long held international agreements.[33] Frederick W. Kagan provides the following insight.

> The world has changed, and the threats we face have changed, and the time has come for a fundamental reorganization of our national security apparatus. This is not a problem of personality dysfunction and it is not a product of ideology, although both have played important roles in recent failures. It is a problem of structure, of organization, and more fundamentally, of the conception of what kinds of war we are likely to have to fight and how we will fight them.[34]

While Kagan discounts personality and ideology, he does take aim at the structure of the NSC. There is evidence showing how a structure was created to assist the nation in mobilizing its industrial base to face a singular nation state, but this is just one issue in a list of many. The significant changes in the national security-operating environment to have occurred in the last twenty five years have placed more emphasis on the necessity of fully integrated interagency policy planning and execution. The structure of the NSC remains as a testament to 1950s

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[32] Geoff Davis, "Interagency Reform: The Congressional Perspective", *Military Review*, Jul-Aug 2008, 2.

[33] James R. Locher III, "The Most Important Thing: Legislative Reform of the National Security System", *Military Review*, May-June 2008, 5-7.

management principles. The council is inflexible in the primary method of policy deliberation and execution yet remains flexible in the role the NSA and his staff play in policy formulation.

Recommendations for Change to the National Security Council

There are three major recommended changes to the National Security Council from recent critics. The first, and arguably most controversial, is the call to empower the National Security Advisor to become at least the executive of the interagency by placing him in a position of authority over the department heads within the realm of policy creation. The extreme of this recommendation would empower the NSA to become an operational executive, in command of not only the policy planning, but also the oversight and control of all of the agencies of government in order to ensure their compliance in accordance with the guidance of the President and the White House. A second recommendation, while seemingly outside of the realm of retooling the council itself, has more to do with where a large amount of power within government lies: within the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Some recommend that the budgeting process for the departments flow through the NSA or some interagency executive secretary on his staff to overcome what the PNSR refers to as an imbalance between resourcing agencies based on mandate rather than operational needs.[35] This would allow the NSA not only authority over the departments, but also a means of ensuring their compliance with policy.

Kori Schake and Bruce Berkowitz, from the Hoover Institution, provide a third recommendation. They call for the Senate to create and confirm *presidential policy directors.* Congress would confirm the policy directors to ensure their peer status with the department

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[34] Frederick W. Kagan, "Two Decades Late", *The National Review*, June 2008.

[35] PNSR Final Report Executive Summary, vii-viii. Multiple authors have echoed the PNSR's findings in this matter. Agencies are funded by mandate, not by the operations that they may have to perform. This means that organizations like the Department of Defense are funded using tedious programs, spread over large amounts of time to pay for everything that they need to exist, but not to actually do their job. Until President Obama announced that operational funding would be placed in the annual budget in 2009, congress was required to pass separate funding bills to pay for the ongoing Global War on Terror.

heads. They would in essence have control of the policy planning and coordination (though it is unclear whether Schake and Berkowitz recommend operational control) over the President's national security strategy. Arguments against each of these recommended changes to the National Security Council are difficult to find and there were some in congress in 1945 who would have preferred these changes to have been implemented as an original part of the 1947 National Security Act. While the bureaucracy and infighting tying down the National Security Council overburden the President himself, he may be the most fervent opponent to the implementation of these changes unless he believes in delegation of authority and trusts his National Security Advisor to accomplish tasks within his overarching guidance. The department heads will likely support the President in his opposition to the increase in authority, since an empowered National Security Advisor may herald a NSC structure and atmosphere unseen since the Kissenger council. While efficient and effective in its policy creation and coordination, the department heads were not pleased with the relegation of the Secretary of State to the role of a policy executor. Instead of seeing the position of the National Security Advisor as a desirable position, many politicians see it as only a stepping-stone to get to be a department head in an administration. With the empowerment of the National Security Advisor, this paradigm would be turned on its head. Undoubtedly, this would ruffle quite a few feathers in the political establishment.

Given President Barack Obama's desire for change in the way that government does business however, it is possible that these recommendations have found an audience at the highest levels of government that is willing to entertain such comprehensive changes to the national security structure. While the changes recommended can never ensure success of national policies, as finding a proximate cause of success or failure at the strategic level also relies on the execution at the operational and tactical levels, they would reduce the friction that has existed in the National Security Council since its inception. While the council is able to create successful policy at any given time, the amount of effort it requires is incommensurate with the outcomes, is often brought to the lowest common denominator to achieve consensus, and is rife with a lack of

unity of effort due to frustration over lack of progress that leads to the implementation of informal processes. The process is not only inefficient, but is unreliable, and every successful strategy can be countered with a set of failed policies generally having the same surrounding circumstances. The failures of the system are increasingly becoming more costly in terms of American lives and treasure. President Obama called for a time of change in government. He has the opportunity to leverage the ideas of the experts in the field and make a change to realign the National Security Council. Given the current global situation, this opportunity for change should not be bypassed for the sake of maintaining a vise-grip on executive power.

> The only difference between a rut and a grave is their dimensions.
>
> - Ellen Glasgow
>
> If you want to make enemies, try to change something.
>
> - Woodrow Wilson

The Question of Regional Policy Execution

While there are certainly issues of relevance at the national level of policy making and coordination, just as many reside at the regional policy execution level, or as the military commonly refers to it as the operational level of command. While many issues stem from the way in which the national system distributes policy down bureaucratic hierarchical agencies, there is much discussion about the best way to ensure successful interagency operations at the regional level. Among the concerns is the seeming dominance of the Department of Defense in regional matters of national security and by proxy, foreign policy execution. While foreign policy is most certainly the statutory realm of the Department of State, the mere existence of the Geographic Combatant Commands creates a dominant U.S. military shadow over a region. Presence and responsibility alone make a Combatant Command a foreign policy tool even when it does not execute operations on a daily basis. Even if the recommendations of the PNSR are implemented over time at the national level, the NSC will continue to be bound by bureaucracy. The political

nature of the NSC will continue to water down national policy, making the role of the regional

policy executors more important. While there are a multitude of changes necessary at the regional

level, even taking the first steps towards a whole of government approach to policy execution will

empower regional commands and offices. These steps are necessary to properly filter the

coordinated national policy provided to regional commanders.

Other issues arise from the disjointedness in the way that the different agencies envision

the world. This may stem from a cultural difference in the outlook each agency has gained over

sixty years of operating within a specific statutory mandate. It may also be from the

uncoordinated creation and modification of boundaries of regional responsibility existing in each

agency. Added to the friction separating agencies as they attempt to comply with national policy

is, once again, the increasing complexity in the world, requiring a comprehensive interagency

solution to national security problems. The Project on National Security Reform (PNSR) brings

out this point in its executive summary stating, "The national security challenges inherent in a

widespread international financial contagion or a major pandemic do not lend themselves to

resolution through the use of air power or special operations forces."[36] Given the current global

financial crisis plaguing the United States, this fact has hit the leaders in Washington D.C. head

on. Perhaps, if the United States is to manage the crises of the future, it is time to enable a

regional policy execution capability that was not created for the global situation in the 1950s or

even the 1980s.

History of Regional Policy Execution

"You've heard us, some of us and certainly me, talk about our foreign policy being too

militarized. I believe that; and it's got to change."[37] Admiral Michael Mullen points to where the

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[36] PNSR Final Report, vi.

[37] Walter Pincus, "Foreign Policy Beyond the Pentagon", *Washington Post*, Feb 9, 2009.

national security system is, but to understand the ramifications of his statement, observers must examine how the United States came to this point in the realm of regional policy execution, and pose the question, "Is the foreign policy of the United States militarized or is this just a matter of appearance?"

Whether foreign policy is militarized or is simply an appearance, the Department of Defense remains center stage with the Geographic Combatant Commands leading the way. While the Department of State is the lead agency for foreign affairs in the United States, the Combatant Commands may have become the de-facto arm of policy execution throughout the globe. The Department of Defense did not get to this point by matter of design, but by matter of consequence.

At the end of World War II, during the same period of the creation of the National Security Council, the military and congress created the Unified Command Plan (UCP). The UCP was an effort by congress to carry forward the lessons learned from World War II due to the changes in warfare requiring unified command over multinational coalitions and joint forces in order to defeat the Axis powers, with the command system in Europe being the example. The first UCP was created in 1946 to overcome the "ambiguous and unsatisfactory" situation with the Army and the Navy under separate commands.[38] While there was much consternation over how to create the unified commands, mostly centering on an argument between the Army and the Navy over functional versus geographic delineation of the commands, a compromise was reached and the "Outline Command Plan" was created as the first step of the UCP. Considering the creation of the Department of Defense in this same period, it is a relatively young agency in government when compared with the Department of State.

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[38] Ronald H. Cole, Walter S. Poole, James F. Schanbel, Robert J. Watson, Willard J. Web, *The History of the Unified Command Plan 1946-1993* (Washington D.C., Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, , 1995), The majority of information contained in this paragraph was

The UCP has faced continual turmoil since its inception. There were challenges within the organizations themselves as (despite the initial idea) multiple commands emerged over the same areas. These internal challenges are oft generalized to be mostly between the ground headquarters and the naval headquarters within a region. An example of this is the battle between Far East Command (FECOM) commanded by General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Arthur Radford, the Commander in Chief Pacific Command (CINCPAC) in the early 1950s. The disagreement on the delineation of control over the Far East came about as the PACOM commander gained a larger area of responsibility over the Pacific Ocean and its islands (which would be a continuing trend as PACOM leveraged its sizable naval influence to gain more responsibility throughout the region). While both commands existed in what is now the PACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR), there was almost a continual battle between the ground commanders and the naval commanders over who should maintain the largest piece of the PACOM AOR.[39] It was not until 1953 that the first major change occurred in the UCP. President Eisenhower put forth a plan to strengthen the civilian control over the military by removing the Joint Chiefs of Staff from the UCP chain of command, making the Secretary of Defense the link to the President from the combatant commands.[40] This move is perhaps the initiation point of the current situation. The empowerment of the Secretary of Defense, a civilian appointee, created a direct link from policy planning at the National Security Council to the combatant commanders and policy execution, exceeding the coordination and control capabilities of the regional State Department bureaus.

The boundaries of the Unified Commands have been in constant flux since the beginning. The initial concept in 1946 of the UCP with Far East Command, Pacific Command, Alaskan

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taken from this comprehensive study. This detailed review of the Unified Command Plan is an invaluable tool in understanding the intricacies of the evolution of the Geographic Combatant Commands.

[39] Ibid, 21.

Command, Northeast Command, Atlantic Fleet, Caribbean Command, and European Command did not survive through 1947, when Atlantic Fleet conformed to the other commands by changing geographic boundaries and becoming Atlantic Command. If there has been one constant in the UCP, it is conflict over the boundaries and responsibilities of the combatant commands. Two geographic areas were the primary focus for this tension: Africa and the Middle East. While the battle over responsibility for the Middle East was settled (at least for now) by the creation of United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) in 1983, it took over sixty years for the creation of a Unified Command that has responsibility for all of Africa. United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) is the newest Unified Command, and the most far reaching in terms of inter-agency development within a Geographic Combatant Command Staff.[41] The possibilities that AFRICOM brings to the development of a truly interagency regional policy execution organization will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

With the Secretary of Defense mandated creation of Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Groups (JIACG) in 2002 and the creation of AFRICOM, recent changes in the UCP have tended to focus on ways to integrate other agencies into the military's operational level planning and execution processes.[42] While this integration is certainly a necessity given the Contemporary Operating Environment, it is possible that doing it through the Geographic Combatant Commanders continues to militarize the foreign policy of the United States, despite the comments by Admiral Mullen. By creating an inter-agency capability subordinate to a military command, it may be construed that the policies carried out by agencies working within the Geographic Combatant Commander's Area of Responsibility are subordinate to the decisions, and thus the

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[40] Ibid, 22.

[41] Ploch, *Africa Command*, 4.

[42] Paul D. Wolfowitz, *Memorandum for the Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor, Subject: Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG) Assessment*, August 2003.

chain of command of the Department of Defense. If the United States is to properly execute civil-military relations that are a reflection of the values of a free and democratic society, it may wish to review the way in which regional military commands are integrating the inter-agency into their planning and execution, and question whether this relationship is appropriate although necessary at this time.

While the Geographic Combatant Commanders have the staff, the regional command and control apparatus, and a system of support enabling them to manage regional crisis, the Department of State does not. The evolution of the UCP has allowed the Department of Defense to slowly establish its regional commands and ingrain them in the workings of the regions for which they are responsible. With the Combatant Commanders in place, the national security system relies upon the DOD regional commands to execute policy throughout the elements of national power. While the Department of Defense's regional approach to policy implementation was a part of the agency from the beginning, the evolution of the Department of State's regional bureaus came late in its own development and took a back seat to the bilateral relationships which existed through the country ambassadors.

While the executive branch and congress share constitutional responsibilities for foreign policy, the State Department has statutory responsibility as the lead agency for foreign affairs in the United States government. From inception in 1789 as the Department of Foreign Affairs through today, there have been changes to the agency's responsibilities with the majority being the passing of duties for internal policy and monitoring to other departments as the United States continued to grow through the 1800s. In 1833, Secretary of State, Lewis McLane reorganized the agency into Bureaus due to its growing responsibilities in relation to the expansion of the United States. The creation of the Bureau of Diplomacy and the Consular Service were the most significant created at the time, with the Consular Service being the most influential element of the State Department since the United States was growing into an exporter of goods to European nations. The State Department gained much more power when, during the United States Civil

War, it was relied upon to convince European nations that the United States would not be

separated into two countries and that it was in their best interest to avoid providing support to the

Confederacy.[43] As the department grew, it recognized that it required regional bureaus as well as

functional bureaus to manage the coordination of foreign policy between countries. While the

regional bureaus were created as needs arose, they maintained themselves as advisory bodies to

the Secretary of State with policy oversight in the region. While created to study and formulate

recommendations to the Secretary, they were not meant to provide direction to the individual

country embassies regarding policy. The ambassadors maintained their authority over policy

implementation at the country level.[44] This arrangement still exists today. With the regional

bureaus residing in Washington, DC, it is questionable how much influence they could wield over

regional affairs if given the authority. The culture within the Department of State may also be a

contributing factor, just as the command system in the Department of Defense is. With a culture

built around the primacy of the ambassador, it would be difficult at best to wrest control over

policy implementation from them and provide that authority to the regional bureau chiefs. This is

especially true since many of the prime ambassadorial posts are still considered awards for

loyalty to the current administration in power.[45] The bottom line is that there is limited capability,

staffing, and budget for a regional system of coordination in the State Department. Throughout its

history, it has relied on bilateral state-to-state foreign policy execution. Unlike the military, which

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[43] Department of State Office of the Historian, *Milestones (1750-1775, 1776-1783, 1784-1800, 1801-1829, 1830-1860, 1861-1865, 1866-1898, 1899-1913),* http://history.state.gov/milestones (accessed January 12, 2009). The majority of background information here on the State Department's regional bureaus was found from the Department's Web Site. It is surprising how little information is available on the history of regional bureaus. What is contained in the historian's web page must be gleaned by scouring the entire history of the department itself.

[44] Smith Simpson, *Anatomy of the State Department* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967) 200, 208, 230.

[45] Scholars & Rogues, "Bush's Patronage Appointments to Ambassador Exceed Father's, Clinton's", http://scholarsandrogues.wordpress.com/2007/06/25/bushs-patronage-appointments-to-ambassador-exceed-fathers-clintons/ (accessed February 20, 2009). For example, President George W.

saw the requirement to create a regional command and control network from the beginning, the State Department has evolved into an organization that has strategic policy creation and tactical policy execution with no regional or operational oversight, making the Geographic Combatant Commands the de facto regional policy coordinator and executor when a regional problem presents itself. This situation is far from ideal, and brings out the question of who is in charge when there is a threat to national interests in a region.

Regional Policy Execution Issues

Just as in the review of the National Security Council, there are major elements of commonality throughout the proponents for change at the regional policy execution level that go beyond the question of, "Who is in charge?" While this question seems to be at the heart of the interagency question of execution and even policy planning, the questions on the periphery gain the most focus. Moreover, it may be that the issues addressed are the result of there being no one in charge, bringing the elephant in the room into view by pointing out how problems revolve around it, much as astronomers identify planets light years away by the way that light bends in relation to an object. While not all of the issues at hand will be discussed, the most salient commonalities will be brought to bear. These range from the neglect of regional policy execution and coordination for the sake of country specific methods, the lack of expeditionary capability in agencies outside of the Department of Defense the result of which is military personnel conducting missions for which they are untrained and undermanned, the rise of ad hoc organizations and command structures to compensate for the rise of regional and transnational actors, and finally the question of the relevance of the Geographic Combatant Commands and their recent attempts to integrate the interagency into their areas of operation. Driving all of these

Bush appointed non-career ambassadors at a rate beyond his father or Clinton. 36% of his appointments to ambassador were political appointments without careers within the Department of State.

concerns over the inability of the United States government to follow through with national strategic policy at the regional level is the change in the contemporary operating environment. If the world was the same as it was in 1947, when congress created the National Security Act, or as it was in 1986 when they penned Goldwater-Nichols, the issues of interagency failure on a regional level may not be as important. While the threats to the national security of the United States have changed, the regional foreign policy implementation system has not.

In his remarks to the Reserve Officers of America, Congressman Geoff Davis points out that not only are there transnational threats that have emerged, but there are sub-national elements that must be addressed in the national security and foreign policy executions realms.[46] While the foreign policy and thus the national security policy for individual countries are being addressed by the Department of State and their country teams, there is no binding foreign policy structure, let alone an interagency national security structure, to coordinate a whole of government approach to transnational policy execution issues within a specific region. The proponent for foreign policy and diplomacy is the Department of State and it maintains six offices broken down by regional bureaus, specifically: Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Near East, South and Central Asia, and Western Hemisphere.[47] While these offices have a regional focus, as opposed to the seven Department of State offices that are functional in nature, they are purely policy investigation and planning centers with no regional command or control capability. The primary source of foreign policy and national security policy execution for the United States is the embassy with the ambassador as the President's own representative.[48] Taking the execution of national security policy from a country standpoint alone, without identifying the overarching requirement to coordinate policy implementation at a regional level, there are multiple challenges

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[46] Davis, "Interagency Reform: The Congressional Perspective", 3.

[47] Department of State, http://www.state.gov/countries/, (accessed January 14, 2009).

that occur within the country teams themselves. There are multiple organizations acting within a country as well as throughout a region, doing their best to implement programs that have been created by their singular hierarchical, bureaucratic agency. While these programs are the result of staff work generated from strategic national security policy, there is no guarantee that as the policy is taken from strategy to operational planning that the efforts of the multiple agencies are coordinated, synchronized, or even de-conflicted (de-confliction being the easiest of the three).

While President Truman had the best of intentions when he worked with the Departments of Defense, State, and Economic Cooperation to create the Clay Paper, in essence creating country teams where interagency elements would come together in the embassy under the sole supervision and authority of the ambassador, he failed to address a continual issue within the interagency system.[49] The ambassador still does not have true authority over personnel outside of the Department of State and in an age when a laptop computer and a cell phone can connect a non-departmental, interagency peer to their department in Washington D.C., the system reinforces the old departmental loyalty incentive system.[50] Thus, the problem with the current country team system in the embassies under the Department of State is actually three-fold. First, the ambassador has no real authority over the personnel from the interagency that are intended to support the country teams since they have a tendency to support their own departmental objectives over the orders and objectives of (what they see as) a representative from the Department of State.[51] Second, there is no regional foreign policy coordination, planning, and execution command structure outside of the Department of Defense, causing defense policy to be implemented on a regional basis, while diplomatic policy is implemented at a country level,

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[48] Donald Snow and Eugene Brown, *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom: US Foreign and Defense Policy-Making in the 1990's*. (New York, Palgrave MacMillan1994), 106.

[49] Robert Oakley and Michael Casey, "The Country Team: Restructuring America's First Line of Engagement*", Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 47, 4th Qtr 2007, 147.

[50] Ibid, 148.

causing yet another rift in the execution chain of national security policy. Third, there are no statutory organizations capable or empowered to engage with transnational or sub-national entities. While the issue of a lack of a singular regional policy execution structure is built of other smaller problems, the way in which the interagency identifies the world is another case entirely which complicates the system.

Congress created what would become the Combatant Commands in 1947 and empowered them in 1949 under the newly formed Department of Defense, deciding on a geographically delineated system of command instead of functional commands. While there are functional commands within the military, the geographic commanders are responsible for policy implementation across the globe. These commands have changed as the world has required, with commands being dissolved, and boundaries being modified over time.[52] While technically the United States Pacific Command and United States European Command are the only commands that existed at the inception of the Unified Command Plan (UCP), even their boundaries and responsibilities have changed over time.[53] Despite the changes within the UCP, the Department of Defense has maintained a uniform ideal of command and control throughout the changes enabling not only regional defense policy planning, but also policy execution. This includes the authority to create sub-unified commands, allowing the Combatant Commander to empower a subordinate with joint capability and access to peer Unified Commands for support. Currently, the Department of Defense maintains six purely geographic commands: Northern Command, Southern Command, Pacific Command, European Command, Central Command, and the newly formed Africa Command. When a map of the combatant commands boundaries are overlaid on

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[51] Downie, *Reforming US Foreign Policy Implementation*, 4.

[52] Ronald H. Cole, Walter S. Poole, James F. Schnabel, Robert J. Watson, Willard J. Webb, *The History of the Unified Command Plan 1946-1993* (Washington D.C., Joint History Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995) 1-7.

[53] Ibid, 127-131.

the map of the Department of State regional office boundaries, it becomes obvious that there are issues in coordinating regional policy execution. While the number of regions has recently been balanced between state and defense, there is no correlation between the boundaries between state and defense with the exception of the Department of State Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and the United States European Command.[54]

A world divided in two separate ways exacerbates inherent cultural emphasis within the departments and makes it more difficult to reconcile regional policy planning, and makes it impossible to coordinate overarching regional policy execution. Retired General Jones, the new National Security Advisor to President Obama, has already identified that this system of misaligned borders and ideology has no place in the new national security system. In an interview with the Washington Post, he stated:

> Organizational maps within the government will be redrawn to ensure that all departments and agencies take the same regional approach to the world. The State Department, for example, considers Afghanistan, Pakistan and India together as South Asia, while the Pentagon draws a line at the Pakistan-India border, with the former under the Central Command and the latter part of the Pacific Command. Israel is part of the military's European Command, but the rest of the Middle East falls under Central Command; the State Department combines Israel and the Arab countries surrounding it in its Near East Bureau.[55]

Even if the new administration were to realign the boundaries within all of the agencies to support a whole of government view of the world, it would have to overcome the next hurdle which is just as demanding; the lack of personnel to create an interagency policy execution team.

According to Congressman Geoff Davis and the PNSR, there is no significant expeditionary capability within the interagency beyond the Department of Defense. The Department of State's Foreign Service corps is too small and is not expeditionary in nature. State lacks the funding, personnel, organization, and culture to enable it to be of significant use in a

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[54] Department of State, http://www.state.gov/t/pm/c17251.htm (accessed January 19, 2009).

[55] Walter Pincus, "Foreign Policy Beyond the Pentagon", *Washington Post*, Feb 9, 2009.

regional policy execution role.[56] The State Department is also, along with the departments of

agriculture, justice, and the treasury (to name only a handful of agencies found lacking), either

incapable or unwilling to provide personnel to fill the newly forming United States Africa

Command to the level initially identified.[57] A common finding among researchers is the

workforce of agencies outside of the defense department is full of personnel who do not identify

themselves as having any expeditionary role in the policy execution of the United States.[58]

According to the PNSR, there is also a natural reluctance of agencies outside of the Department

of Defense to conduct the type of planning required in a regional policy execution staff.[59] While

culture is certainly a factor if unwillingness is part of the problem, funding and asset allocation

may have something to do with an inability of agencies outside of the Department of Defense to

provide personnel to interagency missions or staff. The PNSR points out how the funding

process for interagency missions and staff is non-existent. To fund an interagency run mission,

there must first be a lead-agency designated by the executive and then the funding is processed

(with some exceptions) through the lead-agency system.[60] The congressional system of

committees assigned to provide funding for different areas of government based on functions

instead of missions feeds the parochial system of single agency mindedness that permeates the

government today. The inability of congress to change itself in order to support an interagency

system is beyond the scope of this monograph, but is certainly a limiting factor in interagency

success.[61]

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[56] Davis, "Interagency Reform: The Congressional Perspective", 4.

[57] Ploch, *CRS Report for Congress*, 8.

[58] PNSR, *Preliminary Findings*, 17.

[59] Ibid, 66.

[60] Ibid, 18.

[61] Panel on Roles and Missions, 39-41.

With a national security system unable to provide trained personnel to support the interagency effort, the Department of Defense is forced to assume the lead role in regional policy planning and execution. Simply by the presence of a fully staffed and funded organization with the capability to receive strategic policy (whether it be foreign policy or national security policy) and turn it into operational plans to can be disseminated to tactical units or sub-unified commands, drives an assumption that it is the best organization to carry out most contingency missions within the region. Many have brought this militarization of America's foreign policy to the forefront of interagency dialog including, Admiral Mike Mullen, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and the Former Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. While Admiral Michael Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, points out how he believes the United States' foreign policy has become too militarized, he stated he believed that it could take up to ten years before the human capital needs are met within the other agencies of government.[62] Condoleezza Rice, in a question and answer period after a speech at Georgetown University, remarked how the shortages of personnel in the Foreign Service were being temporarily filled with military personnel.[63] This situation results in military personnel performing missions they are untrained and unequipped to accomplish. Admiral Mullen said in an interview with the Washington Post, "You've heard us, some of us and certainly me, talk about our foreign policy being too militarized. One reason is that such tasks have stretched the military, and as such, we're doing things that we had not planned on doing; had not trained to do."[64] These include tasks that are typically Department of State or USAID functions including funding of reconstruction projects, conducting education programs, and information operations support to the government. According to the PNSR, the inability of the other agencies to take on their fair share of

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[62] Pincus, "Foreign Policy Beyond the Pentagon", 1.

[63] Condoleezza Rice, *Remarks on Transformational Diplomacy, Excerpt from speech given at Gaston Hall, Georgetown University*, Washington D.C, Feb 12, 2008.

international policy execution has led the Department of Defense to assume responsibilities that are not core missions. These failures degrade the level at which the DOD performs primary tasks and reduces the Armed Forces' ability and training level in the conduct of its true core missions.[65]

Given all of these factors, it seems that the default position of the President in a time of crisis is to reach out to the military since it has the command structure and the planning capability to effectively and efficiently manage regional national security threats. As more and more responsibility is placed on the shoulders of the Geographic Combatant Commanders, at least two have reviewed their respective Joint Operating Environments, and identified issues at hand which cannot be addressed by the use of military force. In 2002, the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Advisor ordered the Combatant Commands to create Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG).[66] In addition to this effort, United States Southern Command and the newly created United States Africa Command have moved past this order and are realigning their staffs to reflect what they see as the imperative need for an interagency capability. While Southern Command has seen success in its interagency efforts with Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATFS) and counter illicit trafficking planning and coordination, SOUTHCOM could run into the same problems Africa Command is facing with staffing. According to Admiral Mullen, there may not be a balance found between supply and demand until 2018. Until the interagency expeditionary capability can catch up to the global demand, the military will have to take the lead in regional policy planning and execution. Meanwhile the Geographic Combatant Commanders are making an effort to facilitate an interagency staff capable of accomplishing tasks across a broad spectrum of national security and foreign policy objectives. While these efforts are a first step towards a whole of government approach to regional national security policy

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[64] Pincus, "Foreign Policy Beyond the Pentagon", 1.

[65] Panel on Roles and Missions, 19.

[66] Downie, *Reforming US Foreign Policy Implementation*, 7.

implementation, it brings up yet another issue: proper civil military relations within a democratic society.

In a society where the military is subordinated to the rule of law and the civilian led government, the assumption of regional policy implementation by a military organization seems inconceivable. This structure brings to mind the British Empire and the division of the world into separate military protectorates. After inspection of the current problems in American interagency capabilities, it appears a short-term fix can be attained by creating interagency positions within the Geographic Combatant Commands, although there are at least two major flaws. The first being the possible perception from nation states and the public writ large that the United States is systematically subordinating civilian foreign policy and national security policy to military command and control at the regional level. While this is the most pressing issue, a second may be that given these assumptions from other nation states, the administration must address the issue by realigning the command structure of the Geographic Combatant Commands in a fashion like the one recommended by Dr. Richard Downie. In his unpublished paper on the challenges facing the United States and regional policy execution, Dr. Downie called for the eventual removal of the Geographic Combatant Commanders. His recommendation for replacement is an organization he labeled the "Regional Civilian Led Interagency Organization" or RCLIO.[67] The creation of these organizations could be accomplished easily once the human resource system matches the demand for interagency personnel, and the staffing within a Geographic Combatant Command like Africa Command is completed. Africa Command, touted as the first truly interagency command, has a Deputy Commander for Civil Military Activities.[68] Once the organization fills

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[67] Richard Downie, *Reforming US Foreign Policy Implementation,* 8. Dr. Downie is the Director of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies. His work on the regional command and control system is influenced by his work with the USSOUTHCOM and their successful efforts in counter illicit trafficking. His recommendations also delve into national security reform to support the RCLIO.

[68] Ploch, *CRS Report for Congress*, 6-10.

the key interagency positions, Dr. Downie's idea of a Regional Civilian Led Interagency

Organization is one personnel move away from reality. In the eyes of the interagency, the transfer

of authority to the Deputy Commander for Civil Military Activities is the rightful transfer of

authority from the military to the civilian power, restoring the proper civil-military relations in

United States foreign policy execution. While there would have to be simultaneous and difficult

transfers of command authority from the Department of Defense to another agency and funding

authorization changes in congress, the transfer of command itself is relatively simple. When

creating these organizations, a commander must realize the possibility of this transfer of

responsibility.

Despite these changes (and the possible changes in the future), the new command

organizations fail to address one of the major issues with interagency development and culture:

authority. While the combatant commanders may create positions for interagency personnel, or at

least a forum for a meeting, the commanders lack the capability to exercise any form of control

over the personnel or the budgets associated with their respective operational programs.[69] As Dr.

Downie states:

> The coordination of a particular foreign policy action is currently based on the
> *willingness* of institutions to—first, participate and second, cooperate in executing key
> US government programs in foreign countries and regions…where institutional goals
> conflict due to bureaucratic competition for scarce resources, or where parochial
> institutional interests collide, (which occurs frequently) cooperation based on good will is
> generally not sufficient. (emphasis added)

This issue is repeated in every study of the interagency calling for an overhaul of the

current system. Schake and Berkowitz say the interagency system as a whole is incapable of

efficiency because there is no organization with legal authority to issue commands.[70] The PNSR

points out how the entire national security system cannot achieve Unity of Effort since it is

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[69] Downie, 8-9.

[70] Schake and Berkowitz, 2-3.

incapable of answering to one centralized information sharing authority, let alone achieve Unity of Command.[71] Lamb and Bell postulate that due to this lack of authority throughout the system, the executive must often create "Czars" or lead-agencies over a crisis. The creation of a Czar exacerbates the problem since the position does not come with authority over budgeting for projects, personnel incentives or any form of legitimate authority over the agencies of government.[72] With all of this in mind, those championing change at the regional level have a laundry list of recommended changes, the most significant of which come forth in almost every paper written on the subject.

Recommendations for Change at the Geographic Combatant Command and Regional Policy Execution

The list of issues identified within the regional policy execution apparatus is long and varied. The ideas brought forward to remedy these problems however, revolve around two main themes. The first is the idea that the status quo is just fine and that the United States military will continue to take the lead role as it "coordinates" with other agencies in order to accomplish tactical missions where necessary. This monograph will not spend an inordinate amount of time on this proposal since the preceding sections took the flaws within this idea to task. The reliance on coordination measures to ensure compliance with interagency or military command plans and objectives when historical evidence shows how personnel outside of the military command channels are just as likely to pursue the objectives of their respective agencies may be a method, but it is at best the first step towards real reform. Relying on the goodwill of others is difficult enough in times of peace and stability. When international and regional national security is on the line and political pressure is brought to bear across multiple hierarchical departments, the

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[71] PNSR, *Final Report Executive Summary*, vii-viii.

[72] Lamb and Bell, "What the Troops Need", 2.

willingness to subordinate the individual objectives of an agency to the interagency end-state is not a factor worth risking national security over.

The second recommendation that has come to the forefront of national security reform is the idea of creating a regionally oriented interagency command and control structure that answers to the National Command Authority, the National Security Council, or some other agency that replaces the council. Dr. Downie refers to these as Regional Civilian Led Interagency Organizations or RCLIO's. His general concept is to replace the Geographic Combatant Commands with the RCLIO and turn the departments of government into "interagency providers," much like the relationship existing now between the combatant commands and the services of the armed forces.[73] Dr. Downie also calls for the modification of the National Security Council and the elevation of the National Security Advisor to a position akin to the role of the Secretary of Defense. This modification of both the regional level of policy execution and the national level of policy formulation, coordination, and oversight represents what the PNSR believes is necessary to create comprehensive national security reform. According to the PNSR, the time for minor adjustment has passed and the tinkering done since 1947 is no longer sufficient.

No mere tinkering can transform a national security organization designed, tested, and tempered to deal with a focused state-centric military threat into one that can deal with highly differentiated threats whose sources may be below and above as well as at the level of the state system.[74]

Max Boot, author of *The Savage Wars of Peace* and Olin senior fellow at the Council on Foreign relations, has suggested something akin to Dr. Downie's proposal. He draws on experiences from the British Colonial Office and India Office in suggesting the United States

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[73] Downie, *Reforming US Foreign Policy Implementation*, 10-11.

[74] PNSR, *Final Report Executive Summary*, ii.

should implement its own U.S. Colonial Service.[75] While he quickly says it could never be called by this name and must exist under some amorphous humanitarian sounding name such as "Office of Regional Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance," he points out how the failures in America's interagency system at the regional level are directly related to its singular military focus of command and control. Boot also points out that the US Army is currently doing jobs meant for highly trained and specialized civilians. These civilians, he contends should not only be a part of the "US Colonial Office," but should be part of a "Colonial Service Corps," a mass of certified and trained civilian personnel, capable of deploying throughout the globe in support of U.S. national security directives.[76] This recommendation sounds much like the idea of the Interagency Management System as proposed in National Security Directive 44 in 2005, with the exception of Boot's recommendation of making this a permanent body, which manages operations in peace as well as in crisis. The Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization within the Department of State is responsible for the creation of the Office of Civilian Readiness and Response. The organization is Washington-based and identifies itself as a decision making body, which is a problem when it comes to policy execution. This immediately brings to mind the management of the Vietnam War from the desks in D.C. Second, it identifies itself as being able to augment current organizations with interagency capability and staffing.[77] This only exacerbates the problems of culture, readiness, and authority inherent in the organizations already discussed.

While many of the recommendations received by the new administration are similar in nature (all generally calling for the creation of a civilian led regional organization), the question

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[75] Max Boot, "Washington Needs a Colonial Office", *Financial Times,* July 2, 2003, 2.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Office of Civilian Readiness and Response, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4RQC (accessed February 5, 2009).

becomes, "How will the interagency changes pan out," and "What should the Department of Defense do about the coming change?"

Conclusions

National Security Council

The National Security Council (NSC) Staff with the National Security Advisor (NSA) as its chairman should be given authority to manage operations and have budgetary input for the departments of the government. The time when the United States of America could afford to have members of the NSC with the latitude to act as individual departments when they do not agree with each other is fading. There must be a unifying authority beneath the President. If the President must get involved in the inner workings of negotiating political and bureaucratic infighting among his NSC, the White House becomes burdened with internal affairs and cannot focus on long-range strategic leadership. Empowering the NSA and his staff is the most efficient way to accomplish this.
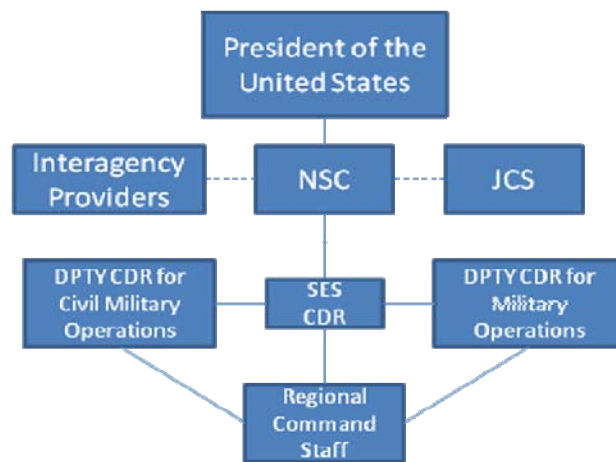
Congress should provide authority to the National Security Advisor, commensurate with his level of responsibility and his position, as well as those of his deputies. To complete the circle, these positions should be congressionally approved. While the empowerment may fly in the face of previous concerns about lessening the power of the executive, the congressional oversight would limit the powers provided. Detractors make an argument against making the National Security Advisor a congressionally approved position. One reason to make this argument is to keep the advisor to the President free from answering to congress. By empowering the National Security Advisor with authority to task the departments of government, there will be no question over the legal requirements of the department heads to follow the orders of the President and the National Security Advisor. The congressional approval will add transparency to a position that has, in the past, been a questionable player in events like the Iran-Contra Affair, Watergate, and the events leading to the Iraq Wars.

Regional Policy Execution

There must be a system of regional interagency organizations capable of coordinating all elements of national power, as well as maintaining influence and authority over country specific efforts. The current system cannot guarantee unity of effort. The stakes are too high to leave national security up to the penchants of personality and interagency infighting. A regional interagency command organization like that forwarded by Dr. Richard Downie is necessary to achieve regional Unity of Command. Africa Command and Southern Command may be building the foundations of these organizations at this moment without realizing it. These organizations may very well cease to exist within the Department of Defense, since a truly interagency organization would bring to question the proper subordination of civilian interagency personnel within a military command organization. While this may not be an anathema to Southern Command or Africa Command, the spread of this system of regional interagency organizations may be of concern to commanders in Central Command, European Command, and Pacific Command, the three combatant commands having traditionally carried the heavy load in military operations in their areas of responsibility. Despite possible push back from these organizations, the idea that the military can continue to be the lead in interagency activities across an entire region has a limited shelf life. The recent militarization of the foreign policy of the United States is at its zenith. It is time for the military to get back to focusing on its core tasks and it is time for the civilian agencies of government to take the lead in foreign policy implementation.

There are of course, questions about how to implement the changes necessary at the regional level as well as what a command structure would look like within a civilian led organization. Dr. Downie provides a framework for civilian led interagency organizations. While he does not get into specifics of staff structures, he does recommend a change in the leadership and in the command channels. Dr. Downie recommends placing the Regional Civilian Interagency Organizations (RCLIO) under the command of the NSC and specifically the

"National Security Authority", to consist of the President, the Secretary of State, and the

Secretary of Defense.[78] Dr. Downie also recommends placing the NSA and his deputy in charge

of an Interagency Executive Leadership Council (IELC). This body would be analogous to the

role played by the Joint Chiefs, and would serve as the advisory body to the National Security

Authority and the NSC.[79] He does not discuss however, the civil-military relationship within the

RCLIO. During times of peace the RCLIO, as Dr. Downie presents it, would be the best course of

action for building a civilian led interagency system. It is still necessary to maintain the Joint

Chiefs of Staff as an advisory body however, and the interagency providers as well (see insert 1).

In a time of war however, it is necessary to revert the majority of the staff back to war planning.

This requires a handoff between the civilian SES and the Deputy Commander for Military

Operations (DCMO). The DCMO is a position that should be manned with a General or Admiral,

just as the GCCs are now. This officer would take command of the RCLIO at a specified time in

order to lead the staff in war planning and execution at the operational and theater strategic levels
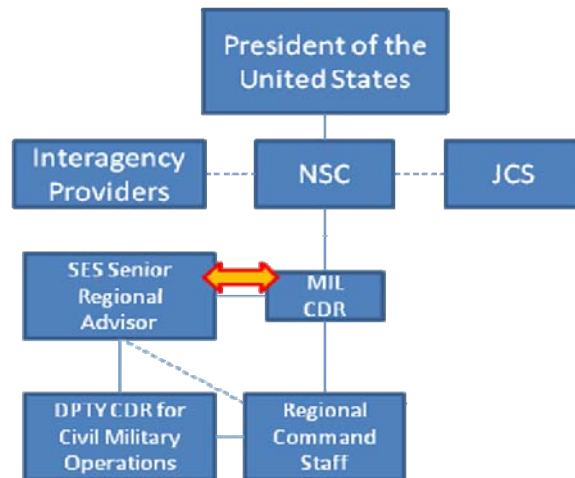
(see insert 2).

(Insert 1)
The RCLIO Internal and External Relationships

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[78] Downie, *Reforming US Foreign Policy Implementation: Creating a Global System of Regional Civilian-Led Interagency Organizations*, 11-13.

[79] Ibid.

President of the
United States

Interagency
Providers

NSC

JCS

SES Senior
Regional
Advisor

MIL
CDR

DPTY CDR for
Civil Military
Operations

Regional
Command
Staff

(Insert 2)
The RCLIO at War

With the handover complete between the SES commander and the DCMO, the SES

becomes the senior advisor to the DCMO and is placed over the Deputy Commander for Civil-

Military Operations (DCCMO) (the position currently held by Ambassador Mary Carlin Yates in

AFRICOM). This is done to maintain the relationship of the DCCMO with the staff and maintain

the close working relationship of the SES commander with the DCMO. Once the military end

state of the operation is completed, or at a time specified by the National Security Authority, the

DCMO and the SES commander revert to their original positions, once again reinforcing the

proper civil-military relations in the United States government.

While the creation of Africa Command is a step in the right direction, just as the direction

to create Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Groups was in 2002, much more is needed. National

Security Advisor Jones recently stated that he would make efforts to consolidate the geographic

boundaries of the inter-agency to ensure there was no conflict generated by how the different

agencies see the world. While this comment may seem innocuous to many, it is the start of a shift

in how the National Security Council asserts itself over the agencies of government at the

regional level. Once this first step is accomplished, and the Departments of State and Defense

share the same geographic boundaries, there should be efforts made to consolidate the

management and command and control of the behemoth agencies into one regional effort. By

creating some form of council to establish Unity of Effort within the shared geographic area, the Departments of State and Defense can take a first step towards regional Unity of Command. Once AFRICOM is a working organization and is fully manned, their JIACG should be the ignition of this forum. By using AFRICOM as an example, the Departments of State and Defense could mesh at the regional level and form a singular, regional policy execution command and control organization. Each step of this process would require congressional involvement and the interest and buy-in of the President. Changing a system that has existed since 1947 will take immense pressure and persistence. The author concurs with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in believing that this process will take at least ten years, if not twenty to implement. Unlike the chairman however, the author contends that this change will happen, and believes that it is of utmost importance that the Department of Defense continue to take action to establish itself within the inter-agency in a way that will ensure its equality as an agency in the coming inter-agency environment. In closing, a quote from the title of another paper: "Gold is the new Purple."[80] The interagency is upon us. It is within us. The military must see beyond the current trend of absorbing the interagency into DOD operations to accomplish missions and understand that it is possible and likely in the future, that it will be subservient to those it is absorbing into its staff structures.

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[80] James C. Royse, *Gold is the New Purple: Interagency Operations in Campaigns and Expeditions*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Command and General Staff College 2004).

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