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Unity of Effort; An Interagency Combatant Command

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AUTHOR: Major Christopher L. Naler, USMC

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Mentor: Col Christopher S. Owens, USMC, Director School of Advance Warfighting
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ABSTRACT

As the United States conducts the Global War on Terror (GWOT) it is evident from our experience, doctrine, and strategy that the conflict will not be resolved solely through either military strength or diplomatic maneuvering. The combination of all instruments of national power allows the United States and her allies the full spectrum of options to respond and deter terrorist and conventional threats. Is the United States agile enough to respond globally, short of a major theater war? The operations conducted after September 11th, 2001 in the Philippines and Central and Southwest Asia prove that the U.S. can respond, but are we postured to sustain this new world war and prepare for the future conflicts? Deterrence and engagement are dynamic responsibilities tasked primarily to the unified combatant commander through the National Military Strategy and Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan. The Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency and other agencies are the key players; each can become Lead Federal Agencies in the United States National Security Strategy. The single entity that coordinates these efforts is the National Security Council, the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials. The NSC also serves as the President's principal arm for coordinating these policies among various government agencies. This 1949 construct may have been sufficient in the Cold War but the 21st Century requires greater agility to respond to both domestic and foreign threats. The NSC is the correct model for planning and assessing our NSS, but is not optimized to coordinate and implement this strategy on a daily basis.

The success of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (GNA) is evident when an empowered unified combatant command leads a coalition of forty-plus countries in multiple regions executing the GWOT. In less then twenty years, the intent of GNA has come to fruition. Is the United States Government ready to follow the lead of DOD and embrace unifying legislation that extends this integration beyond the military? Where can the interagency exploit current capabilities and infrastructure to arrive at unity of effort, akin to DOD’s under GNA, for the complex contingencies of the future?

An integrated civil-military combatant command is the model for the United States to deter and defeat adversaries and engage regional partners in the 21st century. Properly structured to include interagency representation, a combatant commander’s headquarters and associated staff would provide the nucleus for interagency reorganization.

Implementation of this concept would require the following actions: A legislative watershed event similar to the GNA of 1986 would serve as the catalyst for the interagency to adopt this integrated construct; Achieving balance in the command positions, key principal staff billets and action officers throughout the agencies would maintain viable parallel career tracks; Incorporation of agency policies and procedures into the combatant command’s standard operating procedures would facilitate synthesis of agency cultures and perspectives; Recruitment and selection of personnel through professional education programs must target unity of effort; Shifting resources throughout the interagency by capitalizing on the efficiencies gained through combining capabilities would eliminate redundancy within the interagency.

The geographic and functional combatant commanders would possess the infrastructure and resources to assemble an integrated civil-military staff that incorporates the capabilities into a model for unity of effort. The characteristics of each interagency partner would reside in one organization empowered to plan, execute, and assess complex contingency operations with the full measure of the combined instruments of national power.
Introduction

The Armed Forces of the United States routinely participate with other governmental entities in interagency operations, in the United States and abroad. Early inclusion of interagency considerations in military assessments, estimates, and plans will facilitate civil-military integration of effort. The interagency process in the United States, under the National Security Council, focuses on the appropriate functions for military and nonmilitary participants and facilitates unified action in pursuit of national objectives.¹

As the United States conducts the Global War on Terror (GWOT) it is evident from our experience, doctrine, and strategy that the conflict will not be resolved solely through either military strength or diplomatic maneuvering. The combination of all instruments of national power allows the United States and her allies the full spectrum of options to respond and deter terrorist and conventional threats. Is the United States agile enough to respond globally, short of a major theater war? The operations conducted after September 11th, 2001 in the Philippines and Central and Southwest Asia prove that the U.S. can respond, but are we postured to sustain this new world war and prepare for the future conflicts?

Deterrence and engagement are dynamic responsibilities tasked primarily to the unified combatant commander through the National Military Strategy (NMS) and Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan.² The Department of State (DOS), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other agencies are the key players; each can become Lead Federal Agencies in the United States National Security Strategy (NSS).³ The single entity that coordinates these efforts is the “National Security Council (NSC), the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials. The NSC also serves as the President's principal arm for coordinating these policies among various government agencies.”⁴
This 1949 construct may have been sufficient in the Cold War but the 21st Century requires greater agility to respond to both domestic and foreign threats. The NSC is the correct model for planning and assessing our NSS, but is not optimized to coordinate and implement this strategy on a daily basis. General Peter Pace, President Bush’s nominee as the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, posed the following question: “There is no one underneath the president who can follow through on decisions and order different agencies to accomplish what must be accomplished. Do we then need a Goldwater-Nichols-like event for the interagency?”

The success of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense (DOD) Reorganization Act of 1986 (GNA) is evident when an empowered unified combatant command leads a coalition of forty-plus countries in multiple regions executing the GWOT. In less than twenty years, the intent of GNA has come to fruition. In Iraq, “…the capabilities and capacities of the U.S. military on that battlefield were finally the realization of the dream that was the Goldwater-Nichols Act.”

Is the United States Government (USG) ready to follow the lead of DOD and embrace unifying legislation that extends this integration beyond the military? General Pace continues his challenge to the interagency through the lens of thirty years of observation, “In the 1980s, the United States had the best Army, the best Navy, the best Air Force and the best Marine Corps in the world. But they did not work jointly. Arguably today, we have a great State Department, a great Department of Defense a great Department of Treasury, but again they do not work jointly.”

General Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.), former Commander of Central Command, offers a corresponding perspective “In Washington there is no one place, agency or force that directs interagency cooperation. The only such cooperation is on an ad hoc person-to-person or group-to-group basis. So if you have a problem like putting Iraq back together after Saddam
Hussein]… there’s nowhere to start.” General Zinni’s previous comment coupled with General Pace’s challenge coalesce the observations of two former combatant commander’s views on where the problems exist and potential remedies. Where can the interagency exploit current capabilities and infrastructure to arrive at unity of effort, akin to DOD’s under GNA, for the complex contingencies of the future?

An integrated civil-military combatant command is the model for the United States to deter and defeat adversaries and engage regional partners in the 21st century. Properly structured to include interagency representation, a combatant commander’s headquarters and associated staff would provide the nucleus for interagency reorganization. Integrating interagency representatives into key leadership and staff positions would form a cohesive group that maintains the pulse on the region and would be guided by the NSS to follow the President’s intent. This operational headquarters would serve as the strategic interpreter for subordinate units and institutions within the AOR. The geographic and functional combatant commanders would possess the infrastructure and resources to assemble an integrated civil-military staff that incorporates the capabilities into a model for unity of effort. The characteristics of each interagency partner would reside in one organization empowered to plan, execute, and assess complex contingency operations with the full measure of the combined instruments of national power.

**Instruments of National Power: Quit dropping DIMEs.**

"We need as a nation to be able to harness all of the elements of our national power as we move forward for the next decades in fighting terrorism."

As a direct result of September 11th, the National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism outlines an expanded version of the instruments of national power:
The struggle against international terrorism is different from any other war in our history. We will not triumph solely or even primarily through military might. We must fight terrorist networks, and all those who support their efforts to spread fear around the world, using every instrument of national power—diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information, intelligence, and military. Progress will come through the persistent accumulation of successes—some seen, some unseen.10

The traditional diplomatic, information, military and economic (DIME) instruments are listed, but the USA Patriot Act expanded the role of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and this is evident in the purpose of the act: “To deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools, and for other purposes.”11 This type of expanded horizon of the DOJ illustrates the acknowledgment of capabilities that have historically existed but were not stated in our NSS.

Absent from the list is the acknowledgement of the U.S. health care and environmental (HE) capabilities. As a leader in personal health care and environmental health, the United States provides a breadth of knowledge to assist regional partners in preserving life and natural resources. This capability is beyond the common perception of deterrence, but it could serve critical needs if coordinated with other instruments of national power. This is the heart of regional engagement, and it could be the vanguard for U.S. engagement in Africa and Asia.

"Did you know millions of people will die between now and next week in Africa and no one cares?" Gen. Anthony C. Zinni asks abruptly during one of his final tours of his "CINCdom," the vast swath of Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa known as the U.S. Central Command. "When you go out there and see these people, you're their only hope sometimes. You feel bad 'cause you're delivering peanuts." "Millions" of weekly African deaths may be an exaggeration, but Zinni's sense of sometimes being the "only hope" for countries in his military realm reflects both the expanse of his mission and the skepticism he and other CINCs sometimes feel about the foreign policy they increasingly help to shape.12
An integrated interagency organization could provide the regional combatant commands with access to nations which possess either economic or national security interests for the U.S. Increased regional access could originate from the inclusion of the all agencies and the instruments of power each organization wields.

A more inclusive list of national instruments of power should include: Diplomatic, Economic, Law Enforcement, Financial, Information, Intelligence, Health & Environmental, and Military. Recognizing the additional instruments of power would bring supplementary agencies into the overall effort for both domestic and foreign activities. The representation of each instrument in an integrated combatant command would link the operational headquarters to the individual agencies’ strategy within a regional construct.

Equipping the regional combatant commander with the full spectrum of interagency representation would create an agile, engaged and responsive organization. The ability to interpret and execute strategy at the operational level headquarters (HQ) would provide continual engagement through all agencies represented in the HQ and afford all participants a role in responding to conflicts and contingencies. Each agency representative or team would maintain communication with their respective agency and would communicate this through the integrated staff to the combatant commander as required. This would lead to greater agility and diversity of perspectives on the combatant commander’s staff, and would increase problem-solving capabilities accordingly.
**Headquarters and Staff concept**

Figure 1 is a typical unified combatant commander’s headquarters, circa 2005, with traditional structure that reflects the principal staff directorates (reference figure 1).

Using Figure 1 as the baseline, I propose the staff concept shown in figure 2, which incorporates interagency representation into the directorates. Each of these new staff sections will be described in the following pages.
Command Group

The Combatant Commander is retained in the current structure with a four star general or admiral. The Combatant Commander’s responsibilities would remain as written in the current Title 10 United States Code (USC). Who the commander reports to is the contentious issue. One solution: legislation authorizing the Secretary of Defense oversight of agencies outside of his department; this would allow the chain of command to remain intact and provide unity of effort. The commander’s oversight would be similar to a tactical control relationship. He could direct the other agencies only in the roles and missions prescribed by their cabinet level secretary.

The Deputy Commanders are congruent with the U.S Army model of an Assistant Division Commander-Support and Assistant Division Commander-Maneuver. The civilian deputy commander is a DOS Senior Executive Service (SES). The SES Deputy is an experienced DOS executive or in the case of U.S. Northern Command a Department of Justice (DOJ) executive. The DOS position fulfills the prerequisite to assignment as a Bureau director. The Deputy is the ranking DOS representative and concurrently the director of the JIACG. In the absence of the Commander, the Deputy would fill the billet and operate within Title 10 parameters.

The military deputy commander is a DOD O-9 and would serve in accordance with current Title 10 requirements. The Military Deputy would be required to perform the duties of the Commander in the event of vacancy.
Principal Staff

Principal and Deputy Directors include a combination of civilian and military personnel. The command group in conjunction with the assistant departmental secretaries from the various agencies provides nominees to maintain parity in the staff composition (see Figure 2).

The Directorate of Personnel and Resources (P&R) combines the functions of traditional J-1 and J-4 sections. The Director is a DOD Human Resource SES-2 and the Deputy is a DOD O-7. P&R conducts joint and interagency billet management as a primary function similar to the current supervision of joint billets within DOD. Each agency is responsible for recruiting, selection and management of qualified personnel. P&R works directly with the military components and participating agencies in prioritizing resources with a foundation stemming from the traditional categories of military supplies. The prioritization of these resources, in support of the commander’s engagement strategy or crisis response, provides the interagency staff and subordinate units a unified effort at the regional headquarters.

The Directorate of Financial/Economic Development and Requirements/Acquisitions (FED&RA) combines the J-7, J-8 and J-9 staff functions resident in current Unified Combatant Command structures. The Director is a Department of Treasury or Department of Commerce SES and the Deputy is DOD O-7. Experimentation, transformation, and research and development (R&D) would reside at United States Joint Forces Command. The FED&RA directorate maintains the traditional budgeting requirements of the command, but economic development is the directorate’s key function. The directorate possesses the expertise and capability to communicate with regional partners to engage all facets of the economic environment (e.g. infrastructure, agriculture, banking, market economy, currency valuation, trade imports/exports), which assists the nation in regional and potential global market participation.
This economic element is a core capability that complements the daily engagement strategy of a combatant command. As a barometric instrument that measures the economic environment in the AOR, FED&RA provides a wealth of information to the commander, his staff and the associated agencies as they monitor the AOR.

The Directorate of Strategy and Operations (S&O) merges the J-3 and J-5 responsibilities. Its Director is a DOD O-8 and the Deputy is a DOD SES-2. S&O contains the traditional current operations, future operations and a plans section as well as an exercise division. Additionally, S&O possesses the hub for staff action in the Operational Planning Element (OPE), which facilitates all planning requirements pertaining to exercises and operations. The OPE is a cross-functional planning cell of military and civilian expertise. Each directorate would have representation in planning and execution of the command’s mission directed by S&O and orchestrated through the OPE.

The Directorate of Information and Intelligence (I&I) combines the J-2 and J-6 functions. The Director is a CIA SES-2 and the Deputy is a DOD O-8. Intelligence is fused from multiple sources and authorities: Title 10: Armed Forces (DOD); Title 18: Crimes and Criminal Procedure (DOJ); Title 22: Foreign Relations and Intercourse (DOS); and Title 50: War and National Defense (CIA) intelligence resources. Collaboration of information and intelligence into one directorate provides efficiency in the analysis and dissemination to the appropriate decision makers. Management of bandwidth is collocated with the highest volume consumers.

The Directorate of Cultural Communications (CC) employs a career diplomat as director who would likely serve as a future Ambassador. The Director is a DOS SES-2 with a DOD O-8 Deputy. The Director of CC is the most unique aspect of this integrated staff. The Secretary of State appoints this position as a capstone for grooming future DOS executive leaders. The ability
to combine regional expertise with mature diplomatic relationships provides unmatched access for engagement in the AOR. Subordinate staff directors fill the billets of coalition support group, political advisor, religious and tribal envoys, etc. Director of CC conducts coordination with the region’s ambassadors and the chief of missions. Additionally, the Director conducts liaison with Non-Governmental Organizations, Private Volunteer Organizations, and International Organizations to balance the regional network and information exchange.

The Directorate of Legal and Environmental Health (L&EH) focuses on regional health and legal issues in the AOR. The Director is a Department of Health and Human Services SES-1 assisted by a DOD O-7 staff judge advocate or a DOJ SES. The Directorate provides expertise throughout the spectrum from personal to institutional health issues. Assistant directors provide expertise on environmental concerns ranging from conservation to development. The Deputy director provides oversight of U.S. legal issues in conjunction with regional requirements through close coordination with the Director of CC. The Deputy’s primary duty consists of the traditional staff judge advocate and legal advisor roles.

The Standing Joint Force Headquarters Core Element (SJFHQ) is an additional duty for one of the S&O Deputies. The Director is a DOD O-7 and leads the SJFHQ to augment the designated service component command to form the initial nucleus for the Joint Task Force (JTF) staff. The direct interaction with the integrated staff provides unmatched synergy for the JTF commander through direct access to all appropriate agencies in one HQ. This core element corresponds with current joint doctrine, but staff representation would allow the JTF Commander to focus on operational and tactical issues by reducing some strategic layers found in the current staff model.\textsuperscript{17}
The Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) is organized in accordance with current doctrine. Staff representation provides the JTF Commander with resident expertise in the headquarters, and facilitates unity of effort throughout the command by integrating interagency members into the staff and eliminating the necessity for multiple reach-back nodes once deployed. The interagency composition of the HQ allows the JIACG to focus on tactical coordination and direct support of the JTF. The combatant HQ works the seam between operational authorities and strategic diplomacy. This affords the JTF commander a strategic shield and allows a focused effort on the current crisis or conflict.

**Professional Education**

The organization of the staff as shown in Figure 2 provides the framework for interagency integration. Sustaining the billets and growing the right individual for the various positions would be the responsibility of individual agencies. Recruiting and selection of the right individual for service in this construct would require personnel to depart from some traditional career paths. DOD, within the interagency construct, would need to broaden its intermediate and top level service schools in order to ensure its personnel appreciate the newly-included agency’s cultures, roles and mission within the NSS. All agencies would need to adjust their formal education and, ideally, civilian undergraduate and graduate schools would follow suit as they prepare prospective candidates for civil and military professions.

Similar to the current DOD requirements to educate its personnel, the interagency would require additional quotas to established DOD service and joint schools (e.g. Army Command and General Staff College, Joint Forces Staff College). Selection of candidates for assignment with a combatant command would focus on personnel who, like their military counterparts, are in middle level management in their career progression. This would provide a seasoned individual
who is confident in his or her agency’s capabilities and is a recognized expert in that agency’s community. Completing a tour in a combatant command would provide an occupational designation for civilians similar to the military qualification of Joint Specialty Officers. Prospective Directors would participate in a Capstone equivalent course to prepare them for SES-level service in a regional or functional combatant command.

A complementary solution to interagency education, similar to the National Defense University, would be a National Security University (NSU) that mirrors the format and intent of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. Students from the interagency, instead of other nations, would participate in tailored, professional education and research, dialogue, and the persistent, thorough, and thoughtful examination of issues that confront our client nations [agencies] today and in the years ahead. Students would have an opportunity to identify common values, create transnational [interagency] friendships, work toward common understandings, and build a more peaceful and cooperative political and security environment throughout the region. The NSU structure, as the name implies, would provide an open forum for security development as opposed to our current defense-oriented institutions.

**Resources: Who wins and loses in the budget wars**

Aligning multiple agencies within the USG should create efficiencies and therefore eliminate redundancy. Each agency involved in the integration concept would need to review its roles and missions; a process similar to the Quadrennial Defense Review, for the entire interagency would highlight any seams and overlaps. Infrastructure, communications and redundant personnel skills are the first candidates for consolidation. In a two-part study at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a team of 190 experts concluded that:
…the U.S. national security apparatus requires significant reforms to meet the challenges of a new strategic era. As part of its transformational efforts, the Department of Defense (DOD) must adapt not only to the post-Cold War, post-9/11 security environment but also must cope with many “hidden failures” that, while not preventing operational success, stifle necessary innovation and continue to squander critical resources in terms of time and money. Many organizational structures and processes initially constructed to contain a Cold War superpower in the Industrial Age are inappropriate for 21st century missions in an Information Age.21

DOD, as the largest budget consumer, will gain capabilities through increased unity of effort. This type of change is feasible and all participants must recognize their historical contributions to the nation are valued, but are not necessarily efficient for the present or the future.
**Actions required for implementing this construct:**

1. A legislative watershed event similar to the GNA of 1986 would serve as the catalyst for the interagency to adopt this integrated construct.

2. Achieving balance in the command positions, key principal staff billets and action officers throughout the agencies would maintain viable parallel career tracks.

3. Incorporation of agency policies and procedures into the combatant command’s standard operating procedures would facilitate synthesis of agency cultures and perspectives.

4. Recruitment and selection of personnel through professional education programs must target unity of effort.

5. Shifting resources throughout the interagency by capitalizing on the efficiencies gained through combining capabilities would eliminate redundancy within the interagency.

**Conclusion**

*Could our nation benefit from a Goldwater-Nichols-like law for the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government?* The Goldwater-Nichols Act in the 1980s helped move DOD towards a more effective “joint” approach to war fighting – where instead of just de-conflicting, the individual services were pressed to work together in ways that created power beyond the sum of the Services’ individual capabilities. To achieve that better joint war fighting capability, each of the services had to give up some of their turf and authorities and prerogatives. Today, one could argue that the Executive Branch of Government is stove-piped much like the four services were nearly 20 years ago (see Figure 3). So the question arises: could we usefully apply the concept and principles of DOD’s Goldwater-Nichols to the U.S. Government as a whole? Should we ask whether it might be appropriate for the various departments and agencies to do what the services did two decades ago – give up some of their existing turf and authority in exchange for a stronger, faster, more efficient government wide joint effort? And how might we work with Congress to mirror any related changes or reforms in the Executive Branch?

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld provided these observations for future consideration to the 9/11 Commission in 2004. He emphasized the success story of military institutions steeped in traditions that looked beyond their hallowed past and gained more than they invested. This type of landmark legislation, enacted today, could similarly unify all members of the interagency. The effect of GNA on DOD over the last two decades has proven the resourcefulness of its authors in
thinking beyond service cultures and traditions. Using this construct as a potential model for the interagency provides the type of internal transformation required for external integration. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hugh Shelton, in his congressional testimony following operations in Kosovo, highlighted the requirement for interagency integration prior to and during conflict resolution: “We all must move forward with our efforts to achieve increased levels of integrated interagency planning now. To better support other agencies, DOD needs to give greater consideration to political, diplomatic, humanitarian, economic, information, and other nonmilitary activities in defense planning. In addition, the US Government must establish dedicated mechanisms and integrated planning processes to ensure rapid, effective, well-structured, multi-agency efforts in response to crises.”

An investment in personnel and education will allow government agencies the ability to communicate and coordinate in a manner that is unprecedented. It is not enough to synchronize during complex contingency operations; the interagency must integrate into a team that has a common focus with complimentary capabilities. The entity that could conduct this type of coordination is an integrated, interagency unified combatant command.

The previously outlined headquarters and staffing model provides a framework for effective deterrence and engagement. Empowering the combatant commander with all the instruments of national power will allow unprecedented capabilities. Inherent in the structure is accountability of civil-military cooperation, but that natural tension is harnessed into a model that maximizes unity of effort.
Notes


3 United States Government Interagency Domestic Terrorism Concept of Operations Plan, Publication of the United States Government Interagency Domestic Terrorism Concept of Operations Plan (CONPLAN) represents a concerted effort by a number of Federal departments and agencies to work together to achieve a common goal. The CONPLAN was developed through the efforts of six primary departments and agencies with responsibilities as identified in Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-39 (PDD-39). This plan has been developed consistent with relevant PDDs, Federal law, the Attorney General’s Critical Incident Response Plan, the PDD-39 Domestic Guidelines, and the Federal Response Plan and its Terrorism Incident Annex. The FBI has worked with these departments and agencies to provide a forum to participate in planning and exercise activities in order to develop, maintain, and enhance the Federal response capability. Downloaded from http://www.fema.gov/rrr/conplan/letter.shtm, January 2001, accessed 16 February 2004.


6 Jim Garamone.

7 Jim Garamone.


9 Jim Garamone.


14 United States Code.

15 United States Code.
16 United States Code.


19 Col. Paul M. Severance USA (Ret.) (Professor of Military Strategy and Warfare, Industrial College of the Armed Forces). Col. Severance is currently completing a dissertation; one of his recommendations is a National Security University (NSU) to encourage unity of effort within the interagency. Personal interview. 16 February 2005.


23 General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Posture Statement before the 106th Congress Committee On Armed Services, (United States Senate, 8 February 2000).
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