

MEMORANDUM

TO: President of the United States  
FROM: Secretary of Defense (Chris Hornbarger)  
DATE: 23 February 2000  
SUBJECT: A New Strategy for Organizing and Managing for National Security

1. Purpose. To recommend a new strategy for better organizing and managing executive branch assets for national security.
2. Statement of Problem. The current and future threat environment poses security challenges that straddle agency and department responsibilities: WMD proliferation, homeland defense, terrorism, information warfare and infrastructure protection, and international crime, among others. Some of these threats are not new, and we have developed, often with great difficulty, means of coping with them over time. But what is new is the growing magnitude of these threats to our national security, the speed and unpredictability with which they develop, and that in practice they are collectively becoming our main area of focus. While traditional military threats persist, the preponderance of the military missions we are actually conducting and expect to conduct also require a much higher degree of interagency cooperation and cohesion than needed in the past. Our current national security system, designed primarily to ensure peacetime preparedness to wage total war with the Soviet Union, is straining to adapt. We continue to energetically pursue *ad hoc* innovations to keep-up, and have been largely successful so far. But future success is in doubt – one need only consider the potentially disastrous effect of a catastrophic act of biological terrorism on US soil to question whether we really remain one step ahead of our adversaries. *The answer, I fear, is no.*
3. Analysis. While much of the stated problem falls outside the specific area of my authority, as the official chiefly responsible for the defense of our country I feel it is within my purview to make recommendations that will help you implement solutions.

a. *Dimensions of the Problem.*

(1) First, our current system is not readily adaptable. It took us years to develop reasonably effective solutions to combat terrorism and drug trafficking, and despite awareness of the threat for many years, we still do not have an effective system for preventing or responding to an act of catastrophic terrorism.

(2) Second, the immediacy and magnitude of current threats requires clear lines of authority, but responsibility and authority remain muddled (General Shalikashvili's recent comment that he would need a phone book to coordinate the response to a biological terrorist attack is an apt illustration).

(3) Third, even when a solution is in place and authority clearly established, management of the programmatic funding within the agencies involved is haphazard and problematic (consider the funding dispute between the National Drug Coordinator and the SECDEF last year).

b. *Current Organizations are Highly Effective Internally.* While improvements can and should be made, for the most part the executive departments and agencies that deal with national security are high-functioning organizations that have refined their operational procedures and capabilities over time. This is not an argument against change. Rather it is a caution that changes which drastically alter the internal composition and procedures of the departments should be carefully weighed as to their effect. The last thing we need to do is create a short-term inability to respond to a current threat in order to implement a long-term solution!

c. *Current Departmental Divisions Make Sense – They Reflect our Democratic System as Much as they Reflect the Cold-War Threat.* Arguments to solve these problems by bridging interagency divisions with "super departments," "super staffs," or a "First Secretary of the Cabinet" are not compelling. The existing division between Justice and Defense is not a product of the Cold War, but a necessity created by our Constitutional guarantee of civil liberties. The primacy of the President as the head of government cannot be delegated or diluted. Better means of bridging interagency divisions *can* be adopted, but not by pursuing over-convenient solutions that alter the fundamental structure of our democracy.

d. *The Problem Isn't New – But the Consequences Are.* Many of these issues were recognized at the time that our current structure was put in place by the National Security Act of 1947, and even earlier. No system is perfect. At the time, these defaults were secondary to the system's advantages for waging the Cold War. Today, they are of primary concern.

e. *A Model for Success Exists.* Most importantly, the success of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation in effectively addressing the military's persistent inter-service problems provides an appropriate and useful model for addressing our current inter-agency problems – even if the current problems are somewhat more complex. Each of the three dimensions of the problem described above has precursors within the Department of Defense. First, the military's efforts to execute joint warfighting suffered from enormous inflexibility, with occasionally catastrophic results – the legislation fixed that. Second, the legislation established clear lines of authority and responsibility where they had once been convoluted. Third, the legislation established a means to marry these clear lines of authority with a reasonable degree of programmatic coherence, giving CINCs a significant role in ensuring sufficient resources for their operational missions.

#### 4. Solutions and Implementation.

a. *Increase Flexibility by Instituting a Joint Career Service.* Goldwater-Nichols didn't solve inflexibility by redrawing organization charts – it did it by creating a culture of jointness and a foundation of joint competence within the military's senior leaders. This has been perhaps the most lauded aspect of the legislation. The model can be applied to the executive branch as a whole, and indeed, this idea has been proposed many times. The Brownlow Commission of the 1930s called for a career civil service modeled on the British system, in which senior officials spend significant time in multiple departments of the government. Creating a culture of interagency jointness would foster an executive team much more effective at combining the broad tools of the executive branch to address national security challenges. Specifically: (1) Establish a requirement, to be phased-in over several years, for SES officials and a specified cadre of military officers to serve tours in "joint" assignments – either in multiple departments or in inherently inter-agency organizations (see below). (2) Create a joint education system for mid-career officials and officers in the Department of State, Defense, Justice, Treasury, Energy, among others. Expand the National Defense University to accommodate this system, and create a joint curriculum aimed at meeting the operational requirements of inter-agency national security organizations.

b. *Establish Clear Lines of Operational Authority aligned with Current National Security Responsibilities.* The model of warfighting CINCs is a useful analogy. To use a pressing example, our current system for responding to acts of domestic terrorism has interagency assets under the "non-crisis" control of their respective departments, with a cumbersome process to "chop" or lend those assets to a responsible authority during crisis. Such an arrangement is intuitively flawed. Assets for responding to such a serious threat should be under the continuous authority of the responsible official. An alternative example is the *ad hoc* manner in which assets are provided to an operational commander during the onset of peacekeeping, or other-than-war operations. Specifically: (1) Create operational interagency "commands" for domestic terrorism, infrastructure protection, and other operational functions as required. Initially, such organizations should be created within a "lead department," with the chain of authority running from the President through the Secretary of the lead department to the "commander" – the responsible official. (2) Permanently assign all interagency assets required to carry out that operational function to the responsible official. (3) Engage Congress to develop statutory mechanisms to address the complexities of *posse comitatus* and other civil liberties concerns posed by such an arrangement. Strict assignment of roles and functions, detailed procedures and training (heretofore impractical or even impossible), and an independent oversight agency are possible solutions. (4) Actively engage the American public on the pressing need for creative and even unprecedented arrangements for countering such grave threats to our national security.

c. *Streamline the Funding for these Operational "Commands."* Several approaches are possible. One would be to continue to appropriate funds to Departments, with line item appropriations for those assets assigned to interagency "commands." "Commands" would receive a dedicate appropriation to cover training and other requirements, and "commanders," like CINCs, would be invited to testify about the adequacy of their budgets. A more radical approach would be to appropriate all funds directly to the operational "command," which could remain a possibility if the first method proves unwieldy.

5. Potential Criticism and Opposition. The proposals above will likely spur intense debate and controversy, especially since they could be seen to imperil precious civil liberties. Consequently, we should clearly and vigorously articulate the need for reform to the American people. We should engage Congress in a substantive dialog on how to address this important concern. And we should be flexible and receptive to proposals that differ from our own, but which embrace the spirit and intent of what we are trying to accomplish. Second, Congress will be leery of proposals that disrupt the established ties they have with the executive departments. While disruption will be the norm in the short-term, in the end Congressional oversight will be strengthened by creating executive branch officials with the clear and unambiguous responsibility and authority for pressing national security challenges.