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Changing the Interagency

Notes:

Ms Flournoy began by describing the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) which was established in early 2007. The small think tank of about 35 experts focuses on developing strong, pragmatic and principled policies for national security and defense that promote American values. Their efforts try to bring together thinkers of both political parties as well as other national and international viewpoints.

Ms Flournoy noted that she would focus on the work done that is referred to as Beyond Goldwater-Nichols which was the Congressional initiative that brought more of a joint focus to the Defense Department. This second phase of the Goldwater-Nichols concept aims to expand the interactions of organizations not just within DoD but across other elements of national security throughout the government. These studies have been problem-centric which include the primary problems:

- Presidential direction not always implemented usually for complex reasons
- Agencies plan and operate independently with little horizontal integration among government agencies
- Funding is too slow and inflexible
  - Often missing the “golden hour” as in emergency medicine where at little intervention at an early point can do the most good
- Little rapidly deployable capacity is available outside DoD
  - Civilian agencies are generally not prepared to mobilize for crisis situations
  - There needs to be a greater focus on responsiveness

Unity of effort must start with the planning efforts that take place in Washington

- First need to identify the mission accurately
  - Unfortunately, there is no center of gravity to do such things
  - Need a small office to help the President and his advisors handle such tasks
- Operational planners must be allowed to come to the table to be in on the early discussions
- There are some potentially useful models
  - President Clinton signed PD-56 which was a good start
  - Early in the Bush Administration there was a draft that improved on PD-56
    - Never went anywhere because of problems of Afghanistan, etc.
• Nothing ever signed
  • Need to pick some model and work with it at least

Achieving that improved interagency effort involves early strategic planning
• The military is the expert at such planning
• All other major elements of the government do not do any such planning
• When they do have an interagency operation, there is a Christmas tree approach
  • DoD planning acts as the structure – the tree
  • All the other agencies add things here and there like ornaments
• Need to get other organizations involved with military planning from the beginning

There have been some well-integrated operations that have occurred out in the field
• More related to the personalities involved so things work well only sometimes
• Need a better basis for such operations using an integrated application of effort

Need an Interagency Task Force
• Civilian agency representatives should be inserted all through the J-codes in a DoD scheme
• DoD can provide a useful backbone for such organizations
• While this is a great theory, it is hard to pull off
  • No one solution would fit all situations
• Needs experimentation perhaps by JFCOM
  • They could see what works and want doesn’t on a regular basis
  • Could get a better idea of what type of staffing is needed to make this happen
  • Already have some examples from history of operations from Somalia through Iraq that did work or did not

Problem: lack of responsive funding
• Especially critical in post conflict and stabilization periods
• Congress could set up a fund with a couple hundred million dollars
  • Fund would only have broad guidelines
  • Once money runs down Congress could decide whether to refill it or not
  • There are examples with refugee relief funds from 1990s experiences
  • Congress has already learned that you can’t wait for a refugee crisis to start before beginning to debate paying for relief

Part of the solution: Increase operation capacity among civilian government agencies
• Develop an Interagency Task Force system
• One of the most important areas to work on
• Without operational capabilities in other agencies, it makes the military’s task that much more difficult
  • Military then gets mission creep including tasks for which it is not well-suited
  • Such situations force military to postpone its exit strategy
  • Causes both higher cost and higher risk
• Need a small full-time cadre of operational specialists
  • Could cost as little as $200M
  • Would also have a group of reserve specialists on call
  • Could eventually grow the size of the full time cadre after a small pilot project
• State Department has a good model with refugee services
  • Not exactly the right atmosphere
  • A separate group with the right structure could do this
• Would need people with the right skills / training / operational experience
• Otherwise we will keep seeing the same problem
• Would also need a training center
  • Would also provide analysis and a repository of strategic and operational lessons learned
  • Experienced senior members of agencies could be available to advise on planning and operations

Interagency Strategic Planning

All too often in Washington the urgent crowds out long term planning
• There is a need for a National Security QDR with the start of the new Administration
  • Should be a strategic exercise to set the strategic guidance from the President
  • Not as detailed as the DoD QDRs
  • Would also write the new National Security Strategy
    • Would include a classified version with the President’s priorities
    • Would force senior people in the Administration to look out one / two / five years or more
    • Could also involve a table-top exercise to test the concepts
• Need a small office within the NSC to administer this
  • Need a NSC Senior Director who would lead an Office for Complex Contingency Planning
  • Staffed primarily by experts rather than political appointees
  • They would decide what needed to be worried about
  • Defense mission areas would be identified
    • Office would then develop what sort of resources would be needed
    • Some realignments might require Congressional actions
  • Would provide a basis for assessing existing resources and responses
• Will need to think differently about budgeting
  • Consider a National Security Budget
  • Look at higher priority missions and see how the money has been spent to cover the President’s priorities
  • Must look across agencies
• Will need to start with Mission Area Reviews
  • There have been some experiments already but there has been too much “gaming” of the system going on
  • Example of “gaming:” President Clinton reads a book on bio-threats
    • Next morning NSC sends DoD and others tasker about how much is spent on bio-security
    • Decision needed to be made about what was reported back
      • If high number was provided, other agencies would come to raid that pot of money
      • If low number, they would likely be reprimanded for not doing enough
• Solution would be to have more transparency in funding efforts to make sure they make sense

Policy Execution in Regional Areas
• No consistency across regions
• Some ad hoc efforts – some of which have worked – to bring together people for a few days
  • Work like summits to look at ways to avoid a region’s crises
  • Need a process instead
• In the future need Standing Regional Security Councils
  • Can be good if done right
  • If done wrong, then just another level of bureaucracy
  • All too often problems of the day cross national boundaries

Need to find ways to incentivize the development of the Interagency
• Goldwater-Nichols had the same problem when it started to force more jointness in DoD
• Made training and career enhancement rule changes to make it more worthwhile / necessary to individuals
• Need to do something similar among the civilian agencies
  • Require civilian agency personnel to have interagency experience for career advancement
  • Develop a National Security Career Path
  • Require interagency experience for SES-level personnel and/or accelerated promotion
  • Could also be equivalent of joint credit so that the military would find it useful
• Training is a big issue
  • Military already factors in about an extra 5 to 10% for personnel who would be in training at any given time
  • Civilian agencies have no such float – those off training are a loss to their departments

Integration of Homeland and National Security
• Can’t identify where one stops and other starts
• Does not make sense to have two similar NSC-like organizations
• Need to integrate these staffs and put them on an equal footing for pay and power

Conclusion
• Some of these ideas may go against the grain
• Need more investment in operational capabilities for civilian agencies
• DoD must open its planning to be more inclusive
  • Includes training, too
• Congress must get over the idea that this integration of effort would just lead to more government
  • Also must be willing to provide more flexible funding options
  • Congress may also need to provide help in developing the incentive programs
• All three top contenders in the Presidential race have been briefed on these concepts
  • All have made positive noises about moving in the direction of this type of reform
• Looks like there is some chance that changes can be made in the next Administration
• There are even some pockets of interest developing in the Congress
• Must be an eternal optimist to believe that these recommendations might actually be explored / adopted

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Nation-building
• Not every war is a war of choice – Afghanistan, for instance
• We now know that we can’t just declare victory and leave without performing some nation building
• Skills used in nation building / stability ops are also good for use in deterring and dissuading before conflicts erupt
• Therefore, it is useful to develop such skills and have them available

DoD-centric approach to changing the Interagency
• Speaker comes from a DoD background and so uses familiar terminology
  • Should try to find better terms
  • But military way is the gold standard on how to do these things
• After a recent two-week visit to Iraq, saw that some of these interagency efforts worked and some did not
  • Noted that some of the non-military were happy to be working where they were
    • Wanted to make a difference for foreign people and within the State Department
    • Tended to be younger and personally motivated
    • Makes it difficult to do what is needed without support or incentives
  • Basic belief: If you build it, they will come
    • If a system is built to support interagency efforts, there will be people to man it

Incentives for interagency operators
• Might be able to require career people to have interagency experience to reach the level of a GS-14/-15
• Perhaps could provide extra retirement points or “below-zone promotions” for those who have served in interagency positions
• May need to broaden the military’s list of joint assignments to include interagency positions, too
  • Interagency experience could be made the equal of joint experience
  • Must also be done in training

Bring together Homeland Security and National Security structures
• NSC and HSC need to have deputies with equivalent powers within the Administration
• Might be complex because of all the stakeholders involved in Homeland security
• Still much overlap between NSC and HSC responsibilities and interests
  • Need to rationalize this
  • Need to beef up the team on the Homeland side so that they can better stand up to NSC pressures
Strategic Planning

- DoD has the greatest tradition and culture of strategic planning
- DoD people think the system is terrible until they see what happens in the civilian agencies
- Sometimes there is more talking-the-talk rather than walking-the-walk
  - Often not looking at all the choices available related to an issue
- DoD can also be weak on enforcement of decisions that have been made
  - Feedback loop is not well-developed
- DoD can certainly improve its strategic planning involving other agencies but it has problems doing so
  - Sometimes DoD has tried to have planning meetings with other agencies but no one comes
  - Then when they plan to do something without other input they get slapped down for not including the concerns of others

Interagency Training

- An unfunded mandate for teaching planning
  - In some cases DoD organizations took the costs out of hide
- A relatively small line item could provide good support for such programs
- There would need to be cooperation involving FSI / NDU / AID / War Colleges / etc.
- Could use the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance for a model
  - It gets money very quickly to disaster agencies
  - Those involved have rigorous training and are certified for the work involved
  - Even though it is a small group, they deploy often to various disaster around the world
  - Using a military model, it would be possible to build an organization that could attract people with the right skills and mind sets

Incentivizing a cadre within civilian agencies

- Might not work with all agencies
- Need to have a small group of operators
  - The question always comes up: What do they do when there are no operations?
  - Answer: What does the military do when there are no operations?
- Don’t need that many people
  - One specialist has written 3 national constitutions – not done by a battalion of JAG officers
  - Right now there are more people in military bands than work as FSOs
- Compare one group that is basically on steroids – the military – with the other groups that could be considered on life support
- Funding needed would be chump change within the DoD budget
  - Yet the results would be significant

NGOs

- Many of the capabilities needed are also used by NGOs and other international groups
- Models can be found there and expanded upon
- Must start with the US government and then grow out to other potential working relationships
• Reaching out to NGOs would be the obvious next step after interagency improvements

A more active NSC
• Not talking about an NSC that carries out operations or executes plans
  • Everyone remembers the Oliver North problems
• The concept of a Lead Agency does not work well for coordinating operations
  • Most agencies do not take well to getting directions from other agencies
• Need a senior director who is capable of knocking heads of even more senior cabinet members
  • The way to provide him clout is have the President call once to say follow his orders
  • Don’t need a second reminder of the President’s interest in the senior director’s powers
• This can only work if the NSC is properly staffed and properly empowered

Really talking about two populations that do not yet exist
• 1. An interagency organization for strategic planning
• 2. An interagency organization for operational planning
• Training could be the glue that holds these two communities together
• Personnel might be owned by a home agency but would continually work together

Vice President’s role
• While it is worth considering, a specific role for the vice president in interagency efforts has not been developed for this model
• If a president plans to use this model for an NSC, must choose the right people for the tasks
• Complication: vice presidents are usually chosen for reasons totally unrelated to functioning in an interagency environment
  • The idea of a vice president involved in the interagency process could work if the right person happened to be chosen for the right reasons
  • Best not to hang the model on just one office

Skill sets
• What is needed for national security operations planning and execution might also be useful for similar tasks in homeland security
• It is a synergy worth exploring
• Could look at how the military uses its reserve forces
  • Generally, reserves are not mobilized for their civilian skills/experience/occupation but they could be
  • Might be useful to go out and actually recruit people with city planning skills for this new reserve force

Long-term investments
• Things in government tend to be disrupted every four years
• Need more scenario-based strategic planning
• Need to assess options and capabilities
• DoD has already been working this way because of the long lead times for its major systems
• Also need to link back to oversight with NSC involved in the integration effort