

**Prepared Statement of
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**Before the Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities
Subcommittee on Implementing the Global War on Terror**

“Overcoming Interagency Problems”

**House Armed Services Committee,
U.S. House of Representatives**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the subject of interagency coordination in the war on terrorism. I commend the Committee for holding these hearings. My study and experience incline me to believe that better interagency coordination is critical for national security, but especially when the nation is engaged against irregular forces such as terrorists and insurgents. In the course of my testimony I will attempt to explain why by answering several questions:

- Is there a significant lack of interagency coordination?
- How much does the lack of interagency coordination hinder our ability to achieve national security objectives, including those in the war on terrorism?
- Can the causes of inadequate interagency coordination be identified?
- How can inadequate interagency coordination best be diminished or eliminated?

In answering these questions, I will use a variety of historical examples, including some that predate the war on terror. I will do so because I am familiar with these cases and believe they point to lessons that are equally valid today, and because ignoring the history of interagency coordination problems and attempts to fix them might encourage us to seriously underestimate the problem and the means required to solve it. Before attempting to answer the questions I just raised, I need to first make clear that the views expressed in this testimony are my own and are not necessarily endorsed by the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University or the Department of Defense.

Is there a significant lack of interagency coordination?

Many authoritative sources recognize that there is a significant lack of interagency coordination. The most senior and experienced American national security leaders have stated that interagency collaboration is both essential and lacking. For more than a decade congressionally-mandated blue-ribbon panels on national security, such as the 1995 bipartisan Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, the 1997 the National Defense Panel, and the 2001 U.S. Commission on National Security in the 21st Century (otherwise known as the Hart-Rudman report), have all identified lack of interagency coordination as a significant problem for the United States. These study panels were led by and had access to the nation's most senior experts on and practitioners of national security affairs.

Recent congressional and executive branch investigations also underscore that improved interagency collaboration is necessary in specific issue areas. For example, a 2003 internal audit by the Department of Justice concluded that the Department needed but lacked an effective program for interagency coordination on critical infrastructure protection,¹ and an April 2005 Government Accountability Office investigation of U.S. public diplomacy

¹ Department of Justice, "Department Critical Infrastructure Protection Implementing Plans to Protect Cyber-Based Infrastructure," Report No. 04-05, November 2003, Office of the Inspector General, accessed on March 9, 2006 at <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/reports/plus/a0405/find3.htm>.

concluded that necessary interagency coordination was handicapped by lack of a national communication strategy.²

Far from resisting the assertion that there is room for improvement, the current Bush administration leadership has emphasized its agreement with the proposition that interagency coordination is critical and needs to be improved, especially in regards to the war on terror. The current administration's National Security Strategy, National Strategy for Homeland Security, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy and its recently released Quadrennial Defense Review all identify enhanced interagency coordination as necessary. The recent Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 on "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, Reconstruction Operations" also identifies better U.S. Government unity of effort in stability operations as essential for success. And, just this past week, a senior government official is cited in a press article as saying that the President has issued a new directive to better coordinate the efforts of all federal agencies involved in fighting militant Islamic terrorists.

Despite the ready availability of authoritative sources documenting the lack of interagency collaboration on issues of critical import to our national security, I believe that the proposition should and can be substantiated, both deductively and empirically. This is especially important to assess the extent to which insufficient interagency collaboration harms national security, and to help identify the causes of insufficient interagency coordination and likely remedies. Methodologically it is difficult to evaluate the precise impact of insufficient interagency coordination but a strong theoretical and empirical case can be made that it has cost the nation dearly.

Is insufficient interagency coordination a major problem?

In the abstract there is almost unanimous agreement on why interagency collaboration is important for national security and the war on terror in particular: because national security issues require the application of all instruments of national power to be efficiently and effectively resolved in our favor. This is particularly true for fighting terrorists, as the President has argued since his first nation address on the subject following the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Perhaps in times past this country was disposed to see peace and war as two discontinuous states in which national security is pursued through radically different instruments of national power. More recently, however, it has developed into an article of conventional wisdom to note that measures short-of-war that involve the use of force require close coordination of all instruments of national power. This has been true for quite some time, but the point can be demonstrated with a brief overview of some major post-Cold War national security events.

² United States Government Accountability Office, Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: Interagency Coordination Efforts Hampered by the Lack of a National Communication Strategy, April 2005, GAO-05-323.

- Grenada

The invasion of Grenada occurred before the fall of the Berlin wall but is worth remarking upon because it is remembered as the event which, more than any other convinced Congress to pass the Goldwater-Nichols legislation. The lack of coordination between the services during that operation cost the United States lives and prestige. Less remarked upon was the fact that an interagency coordinating body in Washington was ineffective in sharing critical information and ensuring that the information was made available to the commander of the military operation.

Although the invasion was justified on the grounds that the lives of American citizens were in danger, U.S. forces did not even reach the location of the largest number of American students until late in the second day of the invasion. The location of the school and its students was well known in Washington by at least one agency. If the United States had fixed the interagency coordination problems at the same time it fixed the problem of multiple service operational chains of command, the next major military operation in Panama might have been more successful.

- Panama

By the time U.S. forces invaded Panama, Goldwater-Nichols legislation had been passed. In large part as a result of the legislation, the military operations went well, but the operational was grossly flawed by lack of interagency collaboration. Agencies besides the Department of Defense might have contributed to planning and responses to large-scale civil disturbances, but this did not happen. Instead, U.S. forces quickly subdued the Panamanian forces but the United States was wholly unprepared for the massive looting that followed and which was broadcast live to the entire world. The Panamanian government that followed the U.S. invasion had to dig out from billions of dollars worth of damage to Panamanian infrastructure while the U.S. government was put on the defensive and embarrassed internationally.

In part, the lack of interagency collaboration was due to Department of Defense concerns that other parts of the government could not keep a secret. The Department of Defense wanted to preserve the element of surprise for U.S. forces. In part the lack of collaboration was due to a single-minded focus on getting the military part of the operation completed successfully. There were voices inside the Pentagon arguing for more attention to the post-operational environment, but they were ignored. To his great credit, the commander of the operation later took responsibility for this failure and argued to senior Defense officials that it should not be allowed to happen again.

- Somalia

Unlike Panama where lack of interagency collaboration was singularly responsible for undermining the value of the successful military operation, in Somalia it contributed to the ultimate failure of the operation. The Department of Defense wanted a military mission limited to preventing mass starvation of Somalis that would quickly transition

to UN forces, but the Department of State defined the problem and the mission more broadly. The Department of State wanted the U.S. military to disarm the warlords because it felt that failure to do so would doom the follow-on UN peacekeeping operation which it believed the U.S. had an interest in seeing succeed.

The failure of interagency deliberations to resolve these policy differences contributed to the failure in Somalia in two respects. First, the U.S. passed the disarmament mission to a weaker UN force backed by a small U.S. quick reaction force. Thus U.S. policy prevented U.S. forces from doing comprehensive disarmament when they were most capable of it and obliged them to do it under UN auspices when they were least capable of it. Second, after the decision was made to go after a Somali warlord targeting UN and U.S. forces, the U.S. tried to pursue a complicated fight and negotiate strategy without the close interagency collaboration in the field that had characterized the initial phase of the U.S.-led operation. The Senate's investigation of the subsequent disaster correctly concluded "the decision to continue the raids should have been better coordinated within the Administration with the concurrent U.S. effort to revitalize the political process...."³

- Harlan County

Shortly after Somalia, the United States suffered another international embarrassment when a Haitian mob threatened and ultimately succeeded in turning back the USS Harlan County from the docks of Port-au-Prince. Unlike Somalia, failed interagency coordination was a primary rather than merely a contributing factor in the debacle. The Department of Defense was skeptical of the Haiti mission in general and did not want to commit any forces to an ill-defined mission there. The Department of State felt that if it could just get U.S. forces into Haiti, their presence would provide the leverage necessary to control the situation and facilitate a return to democratic government.

The NSC staff used a time-honored technique to overcome these diametrically opposed perspectives; it fudged the issue when writing up the results of an interagency meeting, allowing both Departments to believe that their positions had been honored. The Department of State was pleased that it had succeeded in getting the USS Harlan County dispatched to Haiti where it would offload US troops. The Department of Defense was pleased that it was only committed to a humanitarian mission, and it just sent civil affairs and other non-combat forces aboard the Harlan County. When the mob materialized, the Department of State was disappointed to discover forces aboard the Harlan County were not equipped to disperse them and had to depart. Papering over a critical interdepartmental difference of opinion led to a humiliating episode.

- Haiti

Ultimately U.S. forces returned to Haiti to facilitate a change of government, but not before a great deal of give and take on interagency collaboration. Haiti is often

³ Report from Senator John Warner and Carl Levin on "Review of the Circumstances Surrounding the Ranger Raid on October 3-4, 1993 in Mogadishu, Somalia," September 29, 1995, pp. 49-50.

considered a high-point of interagency collaboration. U.S. government officials were determined not to repeat the kinds of mistakes made in Panama, Somalia and the USS Harlan County incident. To ensure a better level of interagency collaboration, a new interagency “executive committee” was established specifically for the purpose of facilitating interagency collaboration on Haiti. It was supported by working level groups that met repeatedly and identified and resolved numerous minor issues.

Even so, the Haiti experience illustrates that there are some important limiting factors in interagency collaboration even when the subject is given sustained high-level attention. Despite repeated efforts, the executive committee could not decide which agency would be responsible for law and order once U.S. forces were on the ground. This was perhaps the most critical planning issue the executive committee had to deal with, since there was a lot of evidence indicating that the return of president Aristide could cause massive civil disturbances. The Department of Defense did not consider maintaining order to be a job for U.S. troops and wanted the Department of State to contract for the necessary police forces. The Department of State believed that only the Department of Defense had the resources for this job. The issue was left unresolved until embarrassing television images of Haitian police brutally breaking up demonstrations prompted the White House to intervene and direct the Department of Defense to take over the responsibility.

- Bosnian Train and Equip Program

The Dayton peace accords paved the way for an international peacekeeping force in Bosnia. The accords were made possible by, among other things, a United States commitment to the Bosnian Federation government to help train and equip their forces so that they would enjoy a rough parity with Serbian military forces. Thus began a little remarked upon but ultimately successful interagency task force that offers some enduring lessons in effective interagency collaboration. The “Task Force for Military Stabilization in the Balkans” was led by a Department of Defense official who moved to and operated out of the Department of State with the title and rank of ambassador, and who was supported by full-time staff from three different government entities. The small Task Force successfully raised and administered hundreds of millions of dollars in military assistance to good effect without mishap or waste, including congressionally-mandated U.S. military assistance as well as foreign contributions. It drew upon diverse diplomatic, military, security assistance, intelligence, public affairs and legal expertise.

The Task Force encountered significant institutional resistance from its members’ parent organizations. Central Intelligence Agency analysts worried that training and equipping Bosnian forces would stimulate conflict by making them more powerful than the Serbs. The U.S. Army resented Task Force attempts to squeeze all possible resources from the drawdown authority provided by Congress. Mid-level Department of State officials considered the train and equip effort a political liability that was difficult to square with the peacekeeping effort. Nevertheless, the Task Force accomplished its objectives and it is worth noting why. The leader was an

extraordinarily competent individual with experience in the military and the Balkans. It benefited from senior leader support in the NSC and Departments of Defense and State who intervened at key junctures to overcome bureaucratic resistance. Finally, the Task Force effectively controlled substantial resources that allowed it to achieve goals as it thought best under immediate circumstances.

- September 11, 2001

The 9-11 Commission found that lack of U.S. government unity of effort in combating terrorism was a major part of the explanation for the terrorist attacks, and its recommendations largely focus on how to achieve unity of effort among federal agencies in information sharing. The Commission cited the independent authorities of different agencies as the proximate cause for intelligence stovepipes:

The problem is nearly intractable because of the way the government is currently structured. Lines of operational authority run to the expanding executive departments, and they are guarded for understandable reasons: the DCI commands the CIA's personnel overseas; the secretary of defense will not yield to others in conveying commands to military forces; the Justice Department will not give up the responsibility of deciding whether to seek arrest warrants. But the result is that each agency or department needs its own intelligence apparatus to support the performance of its duties. It is hard to "break down stovepipes" when there are so many stoves that are legally and politically entitled to have cast-iron pipes of their own.⁴

The Commission's problem identification in this passage explains not only why the U.S. government has multiple competing intelligence gathering efforts; it also explains why so many operational efforts that should be coordinated end up working at cross purposes. Each agency pursues its own mandate and is loath to make the necessary tradeoffs when their different objectives must be reconciled to the larger government-wide strategy as circumstances and best judgment warrant. The Commission approvingly quoted the Secretary of Defense's observation that this problem might require strong agencies to "give up some of their turf and authority in exchange for a stronger, faster, more efficient government wide joint effort."

Toward this end the Commission recommended the creation of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) to advance interagency strategic intelligence and joint operational planning. The NCTC, codified by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, is responsible for conducting net assessments of the terrorist threat and strategic operational planning with the goal of integrating all instruments of national power. As envisioned, the NCTC was to assign operational responsibilities to lead agencies of the U.S. government for execution, but was not to direct the actual execution of these operations and was not to make combating terrorism policy, which would remain the responsibility of the president and the National Security Council.

⁴ The 9/11 Commission Report, p. 403; <available at <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm>>.

At issue is whether the NCTC as configured and empowered is sufficient for guiding strategic interagency operations in the war on terror. I do not have first-hand knowledge of the work of the NCTC, but I take it from publicly available testimony to Congress that the NCTC is having difficulty pursuing its mandate, both with respect to information sharing and with regard to clarifying its role and authority vis-à-vis the Intelligence Community-wide Counterterrorist Center and other counterterrorism organizations.⁵

- Information Strategy in the War on Terrorism

Immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, an interagency effort was launched to develop an information campaign. Generic themes for the information campaign and more specific themes by region and country were developed by the Department of Defense, which coordinated and obtained interagency approval for them. These themes were passed to Central Command approximately a month after the attacks of September 11 and were used to guide psychological operations in Afghanistan, in particular. Shortly thereafter the Department of State produced a revised set of themes that differed in key respects from those of the Department of Defense. Even with National Security Council leadership weighing in, the two Departments were not able to reach agreement on the different themes, which ultimately reflected different perspectives on policy and strategy issues.

From this inauspicious start, things got worse. The Department of Defense created an Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) that the public affairs and public diplomacy communities, in and outside the Department of Defense, perceived as a threat. Eventually the Secretary of Defense reluctantly shut down OSI after press reports suggested that OSI activities might include misleading the American public. Such national-level themes were not developed for Operation Iraqi Freedom, in part because of the difficulties in getting interagency agreement on such themes updated after the commencement of operations in Afghanistan. Thus, other than periodic public affairs guidance on issues of the day, no other national guidance on a strategic information campaign was released. Tension between the public affairs, public diplomacy and psychological operations communities, and between the Departments of State and Department of Defense, all of which need to collaborate on strategic communications in the war on terrorism, continues to this day. Within the Department of Defense the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review concluded that victory in the war on terror ultimately depends on strategic communication. However, the report does not identify the means to resolve long-standing tensions between the different strategic

⁵ Prepared Statement of Lee H. Hamilton, Former Vice Chair, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States before the Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment, Committee on Homeland Security, U.S. House of Representatives, November 8, 2005; Statement of William P. Crowell, Markle Task Force on National Security in the Information Age, The House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment, November 8, 2005; Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, Report to the President, March 31, 2005, chapter 4.

communication disciplines that are led by different government agencies, or in the case of public affairs, are shared by all agencies.

This list of cases includes examples from small contingency operations as well as the war on terror. This makes sense for two reasons. First, many now believe that the United States will need to intervene in failed states on occasion to prevent terrorists from operating from those sanctuaries with impunity. Secondly, interagency collaboration requirements are greater in some respects than those for contingencies. Unlike many discrete contingencies, the war on terror takes place across regional and functional boundaries within and between agencies. It includes a heavier law enforcement and homeland security component, which require more coordination with more government agencies. In addition, more agencies are employing lethal force against terrorists in the field, which requires more coordination. Finally, contingencies often take place in a compressed timeframe that can focus the attention of senior leaders in ways that make interagency collaboration more likely. However, the war on terror will continue for years and requires close coordination and senior, working level and in the field on an ongoing basis. It therefore requires routine interagency coordination as a norm. It stands to reason, then, that if we have a problem with interagency collaboration in contingencies, we are likely to have a greater problem in the war on terror. In short, defeating terrorists requires interagency collaboration in both complex contingencies and counter terrorist operations, and there is no reason to believe we need the one less than the other or that they are distinctly different problems. Therefore considering both types of cases should be considered a complementary endeavor.

Numerous additional historic cases of failed or inadequate interagency collaboration could be raised in addition to those cited above, including the case of post-war Iraq planning and execution. However, this selective review of cases is sufficient to substantiate some observations:

- Inadequate interagency coordination has either contributed to or been a direct cause of our failure to achieve desired national security objectives.
- Even heroic tactical military successes, as in the case of Panama and Somalia, are insufficient in small or irregular warfare, where it is especially important to carefully coordinate all instruments of national power.
- Interagency coordination can be done better or worse, with Haiti being an example of where it was done better. However, even in Haiti the interagency body assigned to resolve issues could not do so in all or even the most important instances.
- Poor leadership may contribute to interagency coordination problems, but their enduring nature across administrations and personalities suggests the origin of the problem is more systemic.
- Attempts by the National Security Council to paper over deeply held differences and move the process forward can backfire, as occurred in the Harlan County incident. It is

better to confront the problems directly. Even if they cannot be resolved, at least they are identified.

- Small empowered teams made up of experts from different agencies can work well if backed by senior leaders and given resources, as the rationale for the NCTC and the actual experience of the Bosnian train and equip program suggest.
- Problems of interagency coordination have persisted despite numerous modifications to the national security bureaucracy following the events of September 11, 2001.

In sum, lack of interagency collaboration is a major and persistent problem, even in the war on terror, and despite sustained senior leader attention to fixing the problem. Moreover, many argue that the need for interagency collaboration illustrated by these cases from the past two decades will only increase for several reasons. First, the easy, rapid movement of people, goods, information, and capital that characterize globalization threaten social norms and accentuates the comparative misery of those who feel set adrift in the tide of rising prosperity; discontent that enemies of the United States can exploit. Second, the diffusion of knowledge with diverse and rapid lines of communication makes it easier for enemies to attack the United States. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 are indicative but far from the only threats that can be imagined in this regard. Finally, many believe that the diffusion of information age technologies is stimulating a transformation of military capabilities more generally that will increase the speed of military operations in ways that will challenge interagency collaboration across the spectrum of conflict.

What are the causes of insufficient interagency coordination?

The fact that there is so much agreement on the need to coordinate all elements of national power, and yet it remains so difficult to do, suggest that there are deeply rooted and perhaps mutually reinforcing causes of the problem. It is worthwhile reviewing some of the causes identified to date, how much they seem to contribute to the overall problem, and some corresponding proposals for alleviating the cause of the problem.

1. Inherent human limitations

Key decision makers have difficulty absorbing vast and complex amounts of information. They are under great practical pressure to quickly orient themselves to the problem, confirm assumptions underlying the analysis of the problem they are presented by supporting staff, distinguish facts from uncertainties, and isolate a few key factors that seem to get to the crux of their choices. They often have a psychological need to obtain a degree of simplicity in cause and effect explanations in order to make the decision process manageable. At the same time they are under political pressure to be seen as credible advocates of defensible policies that are effective and if not so, ones that can be quickly modified for damage limitation.⁶

⁶ Len Hawley is the source of these observations. During his time on the National Security Council staff Mr. Hawley worked tirelessly to promote better interagency collaboration.

Because of such demands, policy makers may tend to screen out important information that conflicts with preconceived definitions of the problem and preferred solutions. There also may be a tendency to escalate to prevent failure but not to take risks to exploit opportunities that would maximize gains. These and other human tendencies and limitations might incline key leaders in interagency deliberations to exclude the views of smaller agencies or simply overlook their importance as an integrated portion of the solution set. It can be assumed that such human limitations will become more acute as the speed and complexity of operations increase.

Better interoperable communication and video teleconferencing devices, process innovations and decision making aids are suggested for this category of interagency coordination problems. Red-teams can be used to combat “group think” and explore decision paths if senior leaders are open to their use. Artificial intelligence and decision aids can be used to reduce complex problems to core issues and chart logical sequences of issues associated with alternative courses of action. Some intelligence work in previous contingencies and more recently in the war on terrorism has made good use of such tools to characterize enemy leader relationships and clarify choices for U.S. decision makers.

2. Inherent political limitations

It is politically difficult to be explicit about strategy choices. Most United States government strategy amounts to a list of activities that will contribute to a solution to a problem, but rarely if ever does it explicitly choose between courses of action and identify the advantages and disadvantages of doing so. Real strategy choices that could be monitored for progress according to identifiable metrics open up leadership for criticism. Acknowledging that one course was chosen and another not means that when problems are encountered, domestic and foreign critics can criticize the chosen course of action as inept.

Because it is politically difficult to clearly identify and choose between alternative courses of action, the government cannot rigorously assess the risk and benefits between competing courses of action or the alternative investments required to resource those courses of action. Hence it cannot rationally allocate resources to ensure the strategy’s success. In the interagency context, this means each agency can say it is doing enough if it does not want to devote more resources to the effort because all activities are weighted more or less equally. This is one reason why it is so common to find in studies and after-action reports of contingencies and crises that agencies failed to resource an activity that was critical to success.

Even in cases where a good strategy is at least implicitly agreed upon by key leaders in the abstract, the assumptions underlying the strategy and assessments of strategy execution must be periodically reviewed to keep pace with changes in the threat environment. Moreover, in a democracy where public opinion is an important consideration in strategy execution, adjustment to strategy must occasionally be made based on political support. Yet it is difficult to assess performance and update strategy. For example, the tendency of those in the field to put a positive spin on implementation often complicates a candid assessment of progress. To the extent agencies do acknowledge problems within their

purview; they often insist that the problems are already being solved. In short, updating key strategy is a frequent but difficult process of limited value, which explains why so many interagency coordinated strategy statements are not kept current and do not serve as a guide to action even when they are current.

I believe the lack of strategy and the consequent default to crisis management is a major factor contributing to the problem of inadequate interagency coordination. Developing real national strategy choices and updating them based on performance feedback from the security environment is a key prerequisite for successful interagency collaboration in my estimation. To make it politically feasible, Congress and the executive branch may need to work out a new collaborative relationship on public and classified strategy statements that both safeguards sensitive executive branch information and allows Congress to exercise its oversight role.

3. Agency leaders are captured by their organization's equities

It is noteworthy that so many senior leaders are on record before and after their tenure in government as being in favor of interagency collaboration. However, during their tenure, many of these same leaders seem to work hard to further the organizational interests of their organizations even at the expense of interagency collaboration. This inconsistency can be explained by several factors. First, the workload of senior leaders is extraordinary, so they must rely heavily on staff. Staffs naturally assume that protecting their organization's equities is the default position for interagency collaboration efforts. Often they are told explicitly that this is the case, and they act accordingly in lower-level interagency councils, which means that more problems are either not resolved or must be elevated for resolution. At the same time staffs often receive little or no feedback from senior leaders about their interagency meetings, leaving them with a very narrow perspective of the problem and efforts underway to solve it. Sometimes staffs have the impression that only their agency is engaged in solving a problem and therefore believe that their efforts must be protected at all costs. All these factors contribute to parochialism and cause friction that undermines interagency collaboration at the working level.

Since it is not possible to elevate every organizational difference of opinion to the senior leaders, many are left unresolved by default. As the example of Haiti discussed earlier demonstrates, even when significant issues are addressed by senior leaders, they often are left unresolved if they involve deeply held institutional equities. The president cannot be called upon to resolve all such issues. Hence it tends to be difficult and very time consuming to resolve such interagency differences of opinion. It is not always immediately clear why trying to do so will produce more benefits than simply redoubling efforts to act forcefully in those areas that the agency directly controls, which is what many leaders end up concentrating upon.

4. Weak NSC cannot command collaborative behavior

The problem of strong independent agencies and leaders is often redefined as a weak National Security Council (NSC), with the assumption that a stronger NSC leadership or

staff could compel the necessary interagency collaboration. Sometimes the problem is defined just as the lack of interagency planning. Advocates of the Clinton administration's Presidential Decision Directive 56 on Managing Complex Contingency Operations (PDD-56) credit it with improving strategy and planning for Bosnia and Kosovo. This claim needs to be carefully investigated. In my experience, PDD-56 planning was useful for identifying issues and possible solutions, but grew so detailed and cumbersome that it proved of limited value and was largely ignored after Bosnia peace operations were well underway. A better alternative is to model interagency planning on the current Department of Defense effort to coordinate strategic guidance statements for combatant commanders planning for contingencies. These short statements of US interests, objectives, alternative courses of action and the preferred course of action along with key issues for resolution could be kept short and updated more easily.

Beyond collaborative strategic planning, some have advocated a stronger NSC committee system capable of routinely resolving conflicting agency positions authoritatively. Such recommendations often include enduring, uniform bipartisan interagency standard operating procedures and a formal "lessons learned" system. The key, however, is having the authority to compel agency compliance with decisions, and there is reluctance to do this in some quarters. A powerful NSC staff might try to direct operations well beyond their competency, and secondly, the centralization of so much authority might stifle necessary initiative at lower levels of the government. Any such effort to empower the NSC-led bodies would have to carefully consider incentives for collaboration. Currently the incentives that motivate individual representatives from independent agencies sitting on interagency bodies do not reward collaboration. As the example of the Bosnia Train and Equip Program suggests, senior leaders of departments and agencies would need to make it clear that they expected collaborative behavior, something that is not often the norm. It also helps if there is a standing task force within the agency capable of quickly coordinating and speaking authoritatively for the agency on contentious issues. Often this is not the case and the NSC staff must speak to multiple parties within an agency to begin to piece together the amount of cooperation that might be expected on an issue.

5. Different agency mandates produce different cultures that prevent collaboration

Bureaucracies exist to pursue mandates and they recruit, train and reward staff who do a good job of understanding and pursuing those mandates. In turn, these mandates and staffs that are geared toward fulfilling those mandates naturally generate an agency culture that colors the way they interpret a national security problem. DoD personnel, who live in a planning culture, often recommend more national-level planning as a solution to insufficient interagency collaboration. The Department of State on the other hand, sensitive to subtle and fast moving political dynamics tends to regard planning as a waste of time, or worse, a self-fulfilling prophecy that puts DoD in charge of events irrespective of political developments.

These different agency cultures are quite enduring. One study of interagency coordination problems cites a 1961 Joint Staff memorandum to the effect that it is difficult to achieve coordinated interdepartmental planning because other agencies of the US government do

not understand "systematic planning procedures," and each agency has its own approach to solving problems. "The State Department, for example, values flexibility and its ability to respond to daily changes in a situation more than it values planning, while the CIA is reluctant to coordinate for security reasons and the former US Information Agency held Defense and the CIA at arm's length for fear that it would be seen as a mere dispenser of propaganda."⁷ Little has changed since 1961 in these respects. It is still the case that the Department of State generally places little value on planning, the CIA is still secretive about its activities, and DoD continues to believe that more systematic planning is the preferred solution.

Interestingly, many of these cultural predispositions are replicated within agencies in the form of different sub-cultures, most notably between regional and functional offices with the functional offices tending to look at longer term issues and the regional offices concentrating on day-to-day events. Regional offices typically do not like planning. They tend to believe that planning is always too early or too late, that the political situation is always too fluid or sensitive to permit planning, and to have an exaggerated confidence in their own ability to manage the crisis on the fly. When events move too quickly and spin out of control, regional experts in my experience typically just lament the inadequacy of those implementing their guidance. Functional experts can help tee up the problems and solutions that have worked in the past, and they can help anticipate some of the issues that are likely to arise in the future, but they often lack the situational awareness possessed by regional experts to accurately assess the risks and benefits associated with alternative course of action. Depending on the issue, the cultural differences between regional and functional bureaus within an agency can be even more powerful and divisive than the differences between agencies. In that regard they make it difficult for agencies to internally coordinate their positions and that in turn can further complicate interagency collaboration.

Typically the recommended solutions for overcoming powerful agency cultures is exposure to other cultures through interagency training exercises, educational experiences, interagency experimentation with new decision making methods, and interagency "doctrine." Such efforts are routinely mounted in the Washington, D.C. environment, including National Defense University, and have benefits. However, they suffer from a key limitation: lack of incentives for consistent participation. The key players in most agencies are too busy to participate and realize that there is no institutional merit in doing so. They will not be rewarded on the basis of their exposure to other agencies; quite the contrary. Hence it is often assumed that a genuine interagency culture or at least one that is driven less by separate agency cultures would require a true interagency personnel system to protect, nurture and direct exposure to multiple agency cultures. An additional benefit of such a personnel system would be a personnel database of relevant U.S. government experience and contact information (including retirees) so that needed expertise could quickly be matched up with contingency or crisis requirements.

6. Resource imbalance between agencies fuels lack of collaboration

⁷ David Tucker, "The RMA and the Interagency: Knowledge and Speed vs. Ignorance and Sloth?" *Parameters*, Autumn 2000, pp. 66-76.

Another cause of interagency friction is the huge disparity between available Department of Defense resources (including personnel), which are geared for rapid use in contingencies, and the rest of the government which typically is not capable of surging people and resources to the field in response to rapidly evolving events. In the past, interagency brinkmanship that retarded collaboration was a natural consequence of this contingency funding disparity. Many civilian agencies knew that a particular activity such as police training fell within their purview, but they lacked the means to execute the mission. Their strategy would be to wait until the last minute and force the activity on the Department of Defense, knowing that it would constitute the only viable option. DoD would refuse to prepare for the mission in hopes of conserving resources for its primary missions. The result would be lack of preparedness and often poor execution.

Recently Congress has taken some positive steps to alleviate this situation. Two provisions of the 2006 DoD Authorization Act should help. One section allows the Department of Defense to spend up to \$200 million to train and equip foreign forces to conduct counterterrorism operations, and another section allowed DoD to transfer up to \$100 million to the State Department or other agencies for overseas deployment of reconstruction, security or stabilization assistance.⁸ More such contingency funding would allow for increasingly nimble responses to emergency threats, but Congress would have to be reassured that it still could retain oversight of the funds. In any case, such contingency funding will not eliminate the tendency of agencies to safeguard resources for their primary missions. Missions that are not respected by the primary culture of the institution, for example, public diplomacy in the Department of State, expeditionary police activities and training in the Department of Justice, and non-lethal weapons in the Department of Defense will continue to be under-resourced despite their critical importance to the overall effort in the war on terrorism.

7. Lack of authoritative interagency mechanisms at regional and country levels

Not all interagency collaboration problems occur in Washington, D.C. Sometimes it is assumed that interagency coordination is a less acute problem in the field where pragmatic Americans find a way to succeed despite different agency perspectives. Indeed, there may be a greater tendency to cooperate in the field in the face of operational exigencies. Anecdotal evidence suggests the level of cooperation in the field is more a function of personalities than in Washington where bureaucratic equities loom larger. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that on occasion field-level cooperation is cut short by higher headquarters concerned about violations of legal requirements of agency policies or preferences. However, the need for the collaboration in the war on terror is just as acute at the regional and local levels, and it is generally provided for through the lead-agency approach, which tends to produce decidedly mixed results.

At the regional level the Department of Defense's combatant commanders are often the best organized and influential players. They host interagency coordination cells (Joint Interagency Task Forces) that facilitate information flow and sometimes resolve problems

⁸ John G. McGinn, "Transforming Through Cooperation," Defense News, February 27, 2006.

much more quickly than would be possible otherwise with just the services of a single Department of State political advisor, which was the norm before 9/11. Since military-to-military diplomacy is an increasingly important task for combatant commanders, especially in the war on terror, these interagency cells should be continued and well resourced and staffed by their parent organizations, which is not always the case. However, to date the combatant commands sufficiently value these interagency information cells to the point that the Department of Defense has largely been willing to underwrite their activities.

At the local level, the lead agency is the Department of State, represented by the Ambassador who coordinates activities through his country team. The country team is affected by the same limitations that dog all “lead agency” efforts. The other members of the country team often feel that the lead agency does not value or understand their missions or invariably takes the lead agency position when tradeoffs between multiple objectives must be made. Sometimes there is a tendency to work around the Ambassador as a result, or for agencies to struggle over turf issues that the Ambassador has difficulty controlling. For example, a recent press report suggests that there are still CIA and Department of Defense differences over the scope of special operations activities operating out of American embassies.⁹

In normal circumstances the lead agency concept perhaps can be made to work. However, in a major contingency operation historical experience suggests that there must be just one decision authority to make the innumerable and difficult tradeoffs between competing priorities. This is one of the most salient British lessons learned from irregular warfare, and it is one that the United States should adopt as a matter of course. Sometimes highly capable individuals will get along in a close diplomatic-military partnership, but this is not the norm. In this regard I fully agree with the conclusion of the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ “Beyond Goldwater Nichols” recommendation that the President designate a senior official, whether military or civilian, for each major operation to be in charge of, and accountable for, integrating all U.S. government activities in the area of operations.

Many of these seven categories of causes of interagency coordination problems and associated recommendations for addressing them overlap and are mutually reinforcing. For example, process improvements aimed at ensuring alternative views are considered in interagency deliberations might benefit from a dedicated interagency staff to manage the process. The key is to separate the central causes of insufficient interagency collaboration from secondary ones. Fortunately, we have two clues as to what the central problem really is.

The first clue is what has already been tried and failed. In the course of the 1990s numerous interagency planning, training and education initiatives were initiated. Some have been helpful, but none have succeeded in eliminating the structural problems that inhibit interagency collaboration, which as the historical review above suggests, persists as a problem despite nearly universal agreement that it is a key prerequisite for success in the

⁹ Thom Shanker and Scott Shane, “Elite Troops Get Expanded Role on Intelligence,” March 8, 2006.

war on terror. In my estimation this is because lack of good will and understanding of other agency cultures is a contributing factor but not the core problem. In turn, this suggests that an interagency personnel system, planning, training, education, standard procedures, decision aids and other technology enhancements may help but will not resolve the core cause of insufficient interagency collaboration.

The second clue is the different behaviors of senior officials in and out of government. Out of government, they appear genuinely to believe that interagency collaboration is critical. In government, they are not able to generate it. In my estimation the explanation for this apparent discrepancy leads us to the core problem in interagency collaboration. It is not that individual leaders do not value interagency collaboration. In theory they do, and especially when their personal relations are cordial, they overcome major interagency coordination problems that are obviously essential for success—but not always and certainly not routinely. In general, senior leaders find it hard to ensure collaboration with other agencies for the same reason they have difficulty getting their own subordinate leaders to collaborate and share information: it is not currently in their interests to do so.

Sharing information in interagency bodies does not generally lead to better outcomes because no one is empowered to integrate the efforts of diverse national security agencies except the President, and of course he is too busy as a general rule. Providing information in interagency bodies just serves to warn other agencies about how the leader's agency or department's efforts will clash with their own. This puts them in a better position to maneuver around other agency mandates and obstacles and pursue their own objectives. For example, sometimes this knowledge alerts an agency about the type of information it should withhold; i.e. information that would buttress the other agency's policy position. In general it means that when policy contradictions arise or difficult tradeoffs in objectives must be made due to limited resources or other constraining factors, they are not resolved quickly and authoritatively, but usually end up slowing down execution without leading to collaboration. This becomes an increasingly frustrating experience for all concerned. Hence the tendency is to ignore the interagency and focus on what a particular department can control through its own means. It somewhat reflects the volunteer's dilemma whereby an attempt at collaboration is only advantageous if there is a structured way to reward such efforts instead of inadvertently punishing them.

Leaders who are new to government soon come to understand this, and after initial forays into interagency bodies for little effect, often lament and even avoid interagency meetings when possible. Those who have been in government for some time know from experience that the safest path when contentious issues arise is to protect your organization's equities until explicitly told otherwise by senior leaders, which happens infrequently due to their overloaded schedules. It is also true that individual leaders feel compelled by their organization's mandate and their historical legacy to focus on their organization's primary missions. Thus, even when they support interagency collaboration in the abstract, they often are lax in making this clear enough to their subordinates. All this explains why there can be so much apparent agreement on the need for interagency collaboration without the problem actually being resolved.

How can the causes of inadequate interagency coordination be diminished or eliminated?

The core problem causing insufficient interagency collaboration mirrors in many respects the same problem American businesses face in a globalized economy. The speed with which the competition can mount a challenge to an industry leader is greatly accelerated by the diffusion of knowledge and capital across national borders. American businesses such as IBM have transformed themselves to be effective in this more dynamic and competitive environment. Instead of a chief executive officer and supporting staff sitting on top of stovepipes of functional expertise (design, engineering, marketing etc.) that slowly generate marginal efficiencies as they coordinate on or pass a project from functional expertise to functional expertise, many businesses have adopted some form of cross-functional teams empowered with authority and resources to make tradeoffs between competing objectives. The teams consist of experts who come from and eventually return to their functional areas of expertise, but who are trained, rewarded and sanctioned by senior leaders to work for certain periods of time on a cross-functional team.

To truly solve the problem of interagency collaboration, some kind of empowered cross-agency team concept will have to be sanctioned and employed. The 9/11 Commission's description of the National Counterterrorism Center they envisioned is close to representing an empowered cross-agency team, but it has some unfortunate limitations. It is located in one of the national security bureaucracies which limits its perceived mandate and its objectivity. It is limited to net assessments and planning. It does not have sufficient authority and resources to produce desired outcomes in the security environment. The Bosnian Federation Train and Equip task force is actually a better example of an empowered cross-functional interagency team. It had membership hand picked for their diverse skills, resources, and a mandate from the most senior leaders in the NSC, Department of State and Department of Defense.

Someone will object that a small (7-12 members) team might have worked for a limited endeavor like the Bosnian train and equip program, but such a team could not possibly manage something as broad and complex as the war on terror. Yet if the span of control for something as daunting as the war on terrorism is too broad for an empowered interagency team, how can we expect the cabinet-level members of the National Security Council to manage the war on terror on a day to day basis? These leaders have less time than those who would be working fulltime on the empowered cross-agency team.

What would this team do? It would not be just an advisory body, but rather a decision-making entity with control over resources. The president would appoint a hand-picked team leader and would provide that person with a written mandate that explicitly depicted the scope of the team's objectives and authorities. Operating within these bounds, the team would make near-term adjustments to improve management in the war on terror by taking an end-to-end look at problems, and corresponding strategy and strategy implementation. It would be responsible for developing and applying qualitative and quantitative metrics to evaluate the success of strategy implementation. It would intervene selectively to eliminate friction and sub-optimal efforts where different agency efforts are not collaborating to maximum effect. It could recommend changes to strategy based on its

assessment of progress and limitations in the current strategy. The team would be empowered to drill down to whatever level of detail is necessary to identify the origin of sub-optimal performance. The presumption is that the National Security Council will back up their authority to intervene and obtain the results it wants.

For the interagency team to succeed, it first must be constituted and empowered correctly. The team must be given proper resources, to include office space, IT resources, administrative support, and members committed for specific periods of duration and levels of effort. Second, the team must be given clear objectives. The National Security Council must provide the clear, written mandate that identifies what is to be accomplished and why, as well as explains the metrics for evaluation and feedback. Third, the team must be empowered. It must control resources, starting with its membership and agenda, and it must have unrestricted access to information. The team must be allowed to decide how to accomplish its objectives, what expertise is needed, and be able to obtain that expertise. Members assigned to the team to represent bodies of functional expertise in diverse national security agencies must be approved by the team leader and given incentives to collaborate with the other members of the group and not simply represent their parent organization's interests. For example, this means the team leader must be able to return the expert in question to his parent organization and must have a say on the member's performance evaluation. Most importantly, the heads of cabinets must make it clear to their organizations that they are to support the interagency team's efforts rather than protect their parent organization. The team must be rewarded based on both individual and group performance. If the interagency team is not empowered in these ways, it most likely will fail.

Although the presumption would be that the interagency team manages the war on terror on a day-to-day basis and would have directive authority over agencies' activities, they could not possibly micromanage an individual agency's effort. They would not have the requisite personnel and if they were well-led, would not have any incentive for doing so. Instead, their team's focus would be on seeking out and eliminating strategic inconsistencies or confusion and key impediments to strategy implementation. The team would report periodically to the National Security Council (not the NSC staff) on its strategy for success and assessments of progress. It would receive guidance during those meetings, even modifications to its written mandate. Moreover, cabinet level officials could object that team decisions have long-term deleterious effects in their agencies' domain and raise the issue for resolution with the president.

Initially it might be best to define the scope of the war on terror to exclude major contingency operations such as Iraq. However, if this concept is as successful in the war on terror as it has been in some of the world's largest corporations, it could be applied to other national security problems that require inherently interagency solution sets, such as complex contingencies and counterproliferation. It also stands to reason that this type of empowered interagency team could benefit from a professional and permanent interagency staff that would provide administrative support, capture lessons learned, establish standard operating procedures, and undertake other initiatives to foster a supportive interagency culture. This staff would play an honest broker role, not taking substantive policy

positions but simply acting as guardians of the process and laying down the rules of the road for that process. Over time it would be the professional staff's objective to institutionalize an interagency problem-solving culture that makes interagency collaboration easier.

How might Congress support a move to an empowered interagency team concept for ensuring interagency coordination in the war on terror? My first observation is that this is not the first time Congress has expressed an interest in organizational reform to ensure better interagency collaboration against irregular threats, including terrorists. In November 1986, Congress added to the Goldwater-Nichols Act by passing the Cohen-Nunn Amendment to the 1987 Defense Authorization Act. Again, over the Pentagon's strenuous objections, Congress created a unified combatant command headed by a four-star general for all SOF (U.S. Special Operations Command, or USSOCOM), an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, and a new Major Force Program that would allow resources for SOF to be set aside from the service budgets and managed by USSOCOM. Congress also mandated a coordinating board for low-intensity conflict within the National Security Council. It met only once and was abandoned with little fanfare. The lesson here is that Congress can mandate structure but not necessarily spirit, so that interagency bodies created by Congress may not be used by the executive branch as Congress intends.

Since the empowered team concept is absolutely dependent on the active support of the president and his senior cabinet officials, I am inclined to believe it would be more helpful for Congress to engage in a collaborative effort with the executive branch to consider options for better interagency collaboration in the war on terror. Unlike the issue of special operations and low-intensity conflict, the current administration agrees that interagency collaboration is critical and not yet happening with sufficient frequency and effectiveness. By signaling its interest in an empowered interagency team to manage the war on terror Congress might stimulate the executive branch to take this option more seriously. The executive and legislative branches would have to agree on how congressional oversight of the empowered interagency team would work. Congress could also agree to enact legislation that would support the interagency team concept, such as authorizing a professional supporting staff, funds for interagency training and decision aids, and extra contingency funding for elements of the national security bureaucracy currently incapable of surge activities in support of crisis operations. Many of these additional measures would assist in making interagency coordination a norm at all levels of endeavor.

I acknowledge that the core recommended solution I am proposing will be considered radical and impractical. Numerous objections will be raised. I am confident they can be answered. I also believe that this type of solution will seem less radical if we have a major security disaster on U.S. soil and lack of interagency collaboration is again identified as the primary cause for the security failure. A weapon of mass destruction incident in the United States could change our way of life, perhaps forever.

It is axiomatic in organizational reform literature to note that it is politically easier to reform in a crisis but more difficult to manage the reform effort because resources are

constrained and the leadership's attention is divided. On the other hand, it is easier to manage major reform in a steady-state mode but more difficult to secure political support for doing so as there will always be a substantial body of vested interests arguing that major reform is too risky and that it is possible to get by with current limitations. To restate these points more simply, the best course of action on interagency reform is essentially a political problem.

Consider the origins of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation. The Senate and House Armed Services Committees spent years investigating the problem and developing a deep understanding of the causes and best possible solutions for the lack of jointness in the Department of Defense. The staff of the Senate committee even produced a comprehensive, 645-page report, *Defense Organization: The Need for Change*. As is the case today, congressional work on defense reorganization in the 1980s had numerous operational setbacks to study, including Vietnam, seizure of the *Pueblo*, the *Mayaguez* crisis, Iranian rescue mission, bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, and the incursion into Grenada. Despite overwhelming evidence, resistance to the change from the Department of Defense was ferocious. But the determined congressional examination of problems, their causes, and their consequences eventually created the urgency to overcome the Pentagon's opposition.

In that regard I commend the Committee for its investigation of interagency coordination. The lack of interagency collaboration is our most glaring national security problem. It is our most persistent national security problem. Reforms that would ensure interagency collaboration would be the single most significant step we could take to improve our security posture. Interagency collaboration will not be solved through half-measures, partisan efforts, or without a partnership between the legislative and executive branches. Therefore bipartisan congressional interest in interagency coordination can only help. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important subject.