

Statement for the Record
of
The Honorable Thomas R. Pickering
Before the
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia
United States Senate
April 30, 2009

Chairman Akaka, Senator Voinovich, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today on the workforce issues that are at the heart of national security reform.

At a time when the global financial crisis, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the swine flu outbreak are dominating the headlines, it is easy to focus on the crises of the day and not think about the system that addresses them. Now, more than ever, as we deal with current challenges and prepare to address future threats and opportunities, it is essential to focus on how we can better organize our national security system to address the increasing and evolving threats of the 21st century. Workforce reform is an essential element of these efforts.

Comprehensive reform involves changes in the structures, policies, processes, and ways of doing the business of government. It is the people, however, who bring those changes to life and make them a reality. Evidence of the importance of workforce reform can be found in the government's experience with the Goldwater-Nichols Act. While the creation of the combatant commands was a key enabler of its efforts to create unity of command, many believe Title IV of the Act, which addressed joint personnel policies and added training, education, and joint-assignment requirements for career advancement, was essential to producing the unified and joint workforce capabilities of the Department of Defense. As General Schwarzkopf said to the

Senate Armed Services Committee of his subordinates during the Gulf War, “[T]he quality of the people that were assigned to Central Command at all levels changed dramatically as a result of Goldwater-Nichols.”¹

The Project on National Security Reform [PNSR] is grateful for this subcommittee’s initiative in addressing national security workforce issues. While many other reforms will be needed in areas such as structure, process, knowledge management, visioning, strategic planning and resource management, developing a national security workforce will begin to create the environment and capabilities needed for these other changes to occur.

There are many talented employees throughout the national security community who devote their lives to assuring America’s security. Their achievements occur, however, despite – rather than because of – the system’s human capital policies, programs, and procedures. As Congressman Geoff Davis has said, “[T]he personnel policies are not equipped statutorily to even support the nature or the types of missions that we’re fighting.” That must change. Our national security workers deserve better; our nation needs better.

I. Introduction

The Project on National Security Reform’s workforce recommendations were developed in the context of our mandate for reforming the national security system as a whole. PNSR was established to assist the nation in identifying problems and implementing comprehensive reform within the national security system. In November 2008, the Project released its study, *Forging a New Shield*, which analyzed the problems inherent in the current system and proposed recommendations for a sweeping overhaul of the national security system. In addressing the system’s problems and proposing recommendations for reform, PNSR analyzed the current and historical structures, processes, resources, knowledge management, and human capital aspects of the national security system. The Project found that, as currently constituted, the national security system is no longer able to formulate coherent national strategy or effectively integrate the diverse expertise and capabilities of our nation’s workforce. As PNSR Guiding Coalition Member and Former Central Intelligence Agency Deputy Director John McLaughlin said, "The key message is that we have many impressive capabilities in national security – and they work well individually – but today's complex problems require more integrated effort and agility than the current system can deliver."²

To better address our national security challenges, we must improve our strategic thinking and planning and ensure that we are using and integrating all tools of national power to

¹ James R. Locher, III, “Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, p. 7 (2006).

² Benson, Pam, “Study: US Security System Still Broken,” CNN.com 28 July 2008, 28 April 2009 <<http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/07/28/national.security.reform/index.html>>.

strengthen and secure the nation. Furthermore, the study concluded that the United States' national security workforce is the foundation of the national security system, and human capital reform is essential to bolstering our national security.

II. Current Human Capital Challenges for the National Security Workforce

PNSR's recommendations for change are based on a rigorous analysis of the current national security system and the challenges it faces. In the study, the Project identified several findings with regard to the human capital aspects of the national security system:

1. The system does not hire, train, and develop the necessary workforce.
2. The system is unable to correctly allocate its workforce capabilities to address the country's national security needs and priorities.
3. The cultures and interests of individual departments and agencies dominate the system, inhibiting the ability of the government to work with a unified effort.
4. Leaders within the government pay insufficient attention to building the government's institutional capacity.
5. Leaders pay insufficient attention to interagency missions.

1. *The system does not hire, train, educate and develop the necessary workforce.* A successful workforce should include: an adequate number of workers to fulfill the needed positions; individuals hired for positions that match their skills; and adequate career development. Failing to successfully execute these requirements can cause problems for departments and agencies. This also creates challenges for the interagency, which, as a result, lacks the requisite talent pool for addressing significant national security interagency issues.

The use of contractors can complicate the problem. Although many departments and agencies have made strategic decisions to effectively use contractors, other departments use contractors because qualified employees cannot be found, creating a cycle in which the government never develops the needed capabilities required to handle certain national security issues.

2. *The system is unable to correctly allocate its workforce capabilities to address the country's national security needs and priorities.* A significant finding of PNSR's study is that while individual departments' and agencies' missions are important to national security, national security needs and priorities must be defined government-wide and not merely within individual departments and agencies. Currently, the national security mission is not supported by a strategic human capital plan that identifies critical human capital needs across the whole-of-government. Moreover, there is no means for agencies or individuals within the interagency to request workforce resources for national security missions.

The experience of establishing Provisional Reconstruction Teams [PRTs] in Afghanistan provides a prominent example of this:

In some cases, civilian positions remained vacant when individuals completed their tours and were not immediately replaced by their home agencies. Other times, positions were filled with contractors or junior personnel [who] could command few resources from their home departments The lack of training has been compounded by the difficulty of finding experienced and appropriately qualified personnel. In reference to this problem, Deputy Special Inspector General Cruz described interviews with PRT personnel where she “met a veterinarian developing agriculture programs and an aviation maintenance manager co-leading a PRT.”³

Furthermore, while the success of an interagency team requires group achievement, information sharing, and collaboration, current performance evaluation metrics in departments discourage these efforts by focusing on an individual’s performance within his or her agency and not on national security missions or team performance. Congress reinforces this by allocating funds to individual departments and agencies and rarely allocating dollars or positions to interagency functions.⁴ This results in a lack of incentives for departments and agencies to shift resources to interagency missions and activities. In fact, it discourages them from doing so as such takes away from other congressionally mandated programs.

3. *The cultures and interests of individual departments and agencies dominate the system, inhibiting the ability of the government to work with a unified effort.* Organizational culture is composed of the shared values, beliefs, and assumptions that enable an organization to achieve its ends.⁵ The culture of an organization is “a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relationships within an organization.”⁶ As bureaucratic professionals become indoctrinated in their organizations, they learn their organizations’ culture. As a result, when individuals come into contact with officers or personnel from other departments or agencies, they do not see the world or respond to its problems based on a shared understanding of the national security mission or on a shared culture to understand how to design cross-agency solutions. In fact, the incentives currently encourage individuals to support their department or agency missions over government-wide national security missions, thus inhibiting productive interagency collaboration. There must be equal attention to, and incentives for, building an interagency culture that supports the national security mission.

General Wesley Clark’s work with Richard Holbrooke in dealing with Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic is a prime example of both the disincentives for individuals performing successfully in an interagency capacity and the problems caused by the lack of a common culture. To deal with Milosevic, Clark and Holbrooke formulated an integrated and effective

³ David Kobayashi, “Integrating Civilian and Military Efforts in Provincial Reconstruction Teams” (Washington: Project on National Security Reform, 2008).

⁴ “Current System Analysis,” Project on National Security Reform – Resources Working Group, August 2008.

⁵ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985).

⁶ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 90.

diplomatic and military approach. However, as David Halberstam wrote, General Clark's collaboration with Holbrooke was seen as disloyalty and irritated his parent organization, the Department of Defense.⁷ At the root of the Department of Defense's response was the culture clash caused by Holbrooke acting like a "typical diplomat," making it up as he went along, to deal with each event at hand, and not like a military officer, who would make specific, long-term plans. As the national security mission requires the integration of both approaches, it is essential that the system incentivize cross-agency teamwork; that agencies reward, not discourage, individuals working with other agencies; and that a national security culture that respects the differences between specific agency cultures is created.

4. *Leaders within the government pay insufficient attention to building the government's institutional capacity.* The political and career leaders who are responsible for running the national security system must find a better balance between the immediate solution of national security crises and the building of needed long-term capacity within the national security system. Historically, immediate concerns have driven attention from longer-term institution building.

The system contributes to leaders' lack of attention to institution building. On average, political appointees serve fewer than two years in specific positions, which often results in a focus on shorter-term issues. Understandably, political leaders also tend to focus on high-profile policy issues. These high-profile national security policy issues dominate and require immediate attention and resolution. As a result, while institution building, including improving the workforce – with skills such as strategic planning, analysis of long term trends, and such techniques as scenario planning – would improve the system's ability to respond to and resolve crises and, it is often ignored.

5. *Leaders pay insufficient attention to interagency missions.* Senior officials often find themselves defending the interests and prerogatives of their organizations at the expense of interagency solutions that endanger these interests and prerogatives. Senior leaders, and particularly Cabinet officials, have fundamentally conflicting roles. On the one hand, they are responsible for running a department, and on the other hand, they are presidential advisors. As the leaders of departments or agencies, senior leaders must build institutional capacity and manage their departments. This responsibility, however, often conflicts with their role as presidential advisors, in which they must be ready to sacrifice department equities when doing so will improve the chance of success for multiagency or interagency missions. Senior leaders of departments and agencies also have strong tendencies, and incentives, to believe missions are best accomplished either through the singular efforts of their individual departments or agencies or, at a minimum, by assigning their department or agency the lead role for accomplishing a mission. Thus, senior leaders must be incentivized and retrained to focus on interagency missions.

III. Proposals for Reform

While *Forging a New Shield* identified a number of significant problems with the current national security system, it also proposed a series of recommendations to address and solve the

⁷ David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton and the Generals* (2001) 362, 456 ff.

system's identified problems. The Project's human capital proposals are a fundamental subset of these overall recommendations that helps lay the groundwork for our other proposals for change.

A. Imperatives for Changes

Our recommendations are based on four imperatives for improving the human capital workforce:

1. Thinking Strategically.
2. Developing Common Culture.
3. Investing in the Workforce.
4. Encouraging Strategic Leadership.

In identifying the problems with the system, it became clear that at the heart of the system's human capital problems is the lack of sufficient attention to think strategically, develop a common culture, invest in the workforce, and encourage strategic leadership. We need to invest in the development of political and career leaders who can think and act strategically, while balancing the needs of their individual departments with those of the interagency national security mission.

As Ambassador Henry Crumpton said, "Wars of the 20th century taught us the need for joint operations rather than separate army, navy or air operations, as manifested in the Goldwater-Nichols Act. 9/11 taught us that we cannot afford to act as independent agencies. Our success against the enemy largely derives from our mastery of joint, highly integrated operations that unify all the elements of national power into a coherent whole."⁸

B. Programmatic Proposals for Human Capital Reform

Based on the imperatives listed above, the Project on National Security Reform has developed a number of granular and programmatic recommendations for improving the national security system.

Strategic Thinking and Planning

1. *Develop a National Security Human Capital Strategy and National Security Strategic Human Capital Implementation Plan.* In support of the imperative of thinking strategically, it is necessary to create both a National Security Human Capital Strategy and a National Security Strategic Human Capital Implementation Plan. These documents should be based on a rigorous review of the current national security workforce by the National Security Council staff and be written to align national security human capital capabilities with the national security system's

⁸ "Interagency Coordination in Combating Terrorism," Hearing, U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, 4 April 2006.

needs and priorities. The documents should be created on a biannual basis and regularly updated based on changes to the system and its priorities.

The review and resulting National Security Human Capital Strategy and Strategic Human Capital Implementation Plan should define and take into account the tools, capabilities, core competencies, and needs of the entire national security workforce. The Strategy and Plan would outline both the goals for the workforce and the means for meeting those goals. We recommend the creation of two separate documents because a successful strategic implementation plan must be based on a defined strategy.

These documents cannot merely be “bookshelf” documents, but must be operational. To help ensure this:

- a) Departments and agencies must be consulted by and required to cooperate with those reviewing the system and drafting the Strategy and Plan;
- b) The Strategy and Plan must be disseminated to and enacted by individual departments and agencies;
- c) Departments and agencies must develop and task individuals with strategic vision to administer the enactment of the Strategy and Plan; and
- d) The appropriate congressional committees must support the Strategy and Plan through legislative authorizations and appropriations based on the identified needs.

Creating such documents will help ensure that programs to hire, train, educate, and incentivize the national security workforce are aligned with the national security system’s goals, objectives, and outcomes.

2. Create a Human Capital Advisory Board to advise the President and National Security Council. As part of its effort to ensure the system is thinking strategically and creatively and to ensure the National Security Human Capital Strategy and Strategic Human Capital Implementation Plan are being appropriately reviewed, considered, and enacted, a Human Capital Advisory Board should be created. The Board should include public sector experts on human capital, individuals with a broad sense of national security and the needs of the system; individuals from the private sector that have experience with workforce issues and can advise on best practices for managing and improving a workforce; and representatives of workforce stakeholder groups. Members should serve for an extended period of time and, ideally, across administrations. The Board will function as a forum both to receive feedback and to involve national security workforce stakeholders in the strategy and planning process.

Career Development

Thinking strategically can create processes and plans for improving the system, but unless those processes and plans are enacted through workforce development, they will not be effective. Professional development, education, and training are the three essential elements of career development. Strengthening the national security system's career development opportunities and requirements will enhance the system by both improving individuals' ability to successfully execute their specialties and create a common national security culture that will enhance the ability of individuals to work within the interagency.

Career development opportunities should be neither one size fits all nor limited to specific types of workforce members. They must be tailored for both employees and leaders in the system, and to ensure that individuals develop the skills they need for their positions and the system develops important, strategic leadership capabilities. New career development opportunities should build on the excellent work begun under Executive Order 13434 related to national security professional development.

3. *Enact career planning processes and require rotational assignments.* Professional development must consist of career planning and rotational assignments. Both must be implemented to ensure that individuals advance in their specialties and develop skills necessary for working in the interagency environment.

Career planning shall include, but not be limited to, guidelines for position selection, training, education, and types of assignments, and be used to guide careers and in making position and promotion decisions.

National security professionals should also be required to fulfill extended assignments in departments or agencies other than their own. Rotational assignment requirements for service in interagency positions are especially important because, like the military's jointness requirement, they expose individuals to different parts of the government and encourage thinking about the government as a whole institution. These requirements should be significant and, while they will take time to phase in, apply to all individuals serving in national security positions with interagency responsibilities.

The workforce reform elements of the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Foreign Service officer requirements serve as useful models for requiring rotational assignments. Under Title IV of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, joint specialty officers must participate in joint duty assignments to meet promotion requirements, and individuals may not be promoted to the rank of General or Admiral without first serving in a joint duty assignment. Similarly, prior to receiving tenure as a career Foreign Service officer, junior Foreign Service officers are expected to serve in at least two functional fields (administration, consular, economic/commercial, political affairs, and public diplomacy) and in consular work abroad for at least ten months. Both the Goldwater-Nichols Act reforms and the Foreign Service officer tenure requirements are successful because

they make a rotational assignment a requirement for promotion. Both the military and the Foreign Service have benefited from these requirements, which gave their officers a broader set of experiences, enhancing their performance capabilities. As demonstrated by the military and Foreign Service officer experience, rotational assignments should be a prerequisite for the promotion of national security professionals to ensure their individual success and the success of national security workforce reform.

Also, a concerted effort must be made to ensure that a) departments and agencies do not attempt to avoid rotational assignment requirements for their best and brightest by claiming exceptions or tracking them to non-interagency careers; b) departments and agencies do not avoid defining positions as interagency or requiring interagency expertise; c) individuals are correctly evaluated for their performance as part of an interagency team when working in an interagency or rotational assignment; and d) that individuals are rewarded for supporting their interagency team's mission and efforts rather than protecting a department or agency's turf.

The work done to implement Executive Order 13434 and the joint assignment initiatives of the intelligence community are examples of steps in the right direction for promoting professional development and rotational assignments.

4. *Enact training and educational requirements for national security professionals.* One of the keys to the military's success in developing its members is that whenever someone is not in an operational assignment he or she is in a training or educational assignment. Training and educational requirements and opportunities are essential for a professional's career development. Military officers spend a significant percentage of their careers in training and educational opportunities that are unmatched by any other department or agency. Even the most qualified and dedicated non-military national security professionals will not be sufficiently trained or educated and have the full career development opportunities of their military counterparts.

For example, the Foreign Service has rotational assignment requirements, but limited educational and training requirements and opportunities. In fact, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, a strong advocate of addressing the lack of training for Foreign Service officers, contrasted his experience in the military – spending six out of an almost 36 year career in school – with the few months of area studies, and related non-language training, a typical Senior Foreign Service member received. Secretary Powell called his experience an “enormous investments on the part of the Army in getting [him] ready for whatever came.”⁹

Training requirements must be put in place for individuals working in national security and the interagency. Such requirements are essential to ensure individuals know how to work with and use all the government's tools when developing and implementing national security

⁹ John K. Naland, “Training America's Diplomats: Better Than Ever, but is it Enough? How Underinvestment in Foreign Service Training is Hurting U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Service Journal*, p. 71, October 2008.

policy. Training should include both orientation to the national security system and the specific jobs within it, and continuing instruction to help national security professionals do their jobs better and use the tools of the system.

A successful orientation program will, among other things, teach national security professionals about the components of the national security system – federal, state, local, and tribal – including their authorities, responsibilities, and how they interact and work together; interagency skills and the tools for implementing interagency integration; the budgeting process and how it relates to planning and implementing interagency national security missions; and the federal government’s national security strategy. Training programs should be enabled, but not limited, by statute. The world is fast-changing, and what is needed now to improve the system may be different than what is need by the system 5, 10, or 15 years from now.

Similarly, educational requirements and opportunities must also be created for national security professionals. Educational requirements and opportunities should focus on both the skills and knowledge an individual needs to succeed within his or her specialty and the skills and knowledge an individual needs to be successful in the interagency. Such continuing education will both improve the quality of national security professionals and make entering and remaining in this line of service a much more appealing opportunity.

As will be discussed in more detail below, the success of additional training and educational requirements and opportunities is dependent on the creation of a personnel float to allow individuals to spend adequate time in training and educational assignments without hampering departments and agencies.

5. *Creating professional designation and programs.* Improving the development of national security professionals is not a one size fits all proposition and cannot happen through immediate action. It must happen through a number of designations and programs that address specific types of workers and employees. This would include a National Security Fellowship that would train professionals in important skills – such as strategic thinking, planning, joint operation implementation, and operation assessment – and require enhanced rotational assignments to encourage whole-of-government thinking. The system should also create a cadre of interagency national security professionals to lead the system for whom, like Generals and Admirals, there would be even higher education, training, and rotational assignment requirements.

6. *Enact and enhance the National Security Education and Training Consortium.* The National Security Education and Training Consortium should be established and funded in statute. The Consortium would consist of public and private sector educational institutions that address national security issues and train national security professionals. The Consortium, in consultation with the National Security Council and department and agency chief human capital officers, should oversee the development and implementation of training and education curricula

for national security professionals that augment both individuals' knowledge and skills related to their specialties and their ability to perform within the interagency. Current federal national security training institutions such as the National Defense University, the Foreign Service Institute, and the National Defense Intelligence College would work in partnership as the backbone of this Consortium.

7. *Tuition reimbursement and loan repayment plans for foreign language speakers and technical experts.* Congress should adapt current, or create new, tuition reimbursement and loan repayment plans to cover foreign language speakers, technical experts, and other competencies that the national security workforce needs and has trouble recruiting. These programs should be used both to recruit individuals that have finished educational programs as well as those currently enrolled in an educational institution. The Undergraduate and Graduate Foreign Affairs Fellowships, which provide funding to participants as they are preparing academically and professionally to enter the U.S. Foreign Service, would be models for fellowships for current students pursuing careers in national security.

Individuals with education and experience in these areas are essential to our national security, and efforts must be made to recruit and retain them. Tuition reimbursement and loan repayment plans are tools that can support such recruitment and retention efforts.

8. *Build a personnel float to enable career development opportunities.* As mentioned above, the system's career development goals can only be met through the creation of a civilian personnel float. Many departments can barely meet their current personnel needs, giving them little to no ability to incorporate systematic education, training, and career development opportunities. In contrast, the military not only allows, but also encourages such opportunities. This is enabled by its personnel float, which permits members to participate in training, education, and joint assignments opportunities.

For example, The American Academy of Diplomacy and the Stimson Center, in a report titled *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness* suggest that beyond the need to expand American staffing within the State Department by 1,099 employees by Fiscal Year 2014, another 1,287 individuals must be hired to create the necessary float for increased training and education within the Department.¹⁰ Similarly, Beyond Goldwater-Nichols recommended creation of a personnel float of about a 1,000 career civilian positions in the office of the Secretary of Defense and defense agencies to enable its non-military personnel to have adequate education, training, and rotational assignment opportunities.¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.stimson.org/pub.cfm?id=708>.

¹¹ Clark A. Murdock, Michele A. Flournoy, Christopher A. Williams, Kurt M. Campbell, *Beyond Goldwater Nichols: Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase I Report*, p. 9 (2004).

Professional development, training, and educational requirements and opportunities will succeed, and the national security workforce will meet its potential, only if Congress authorizes and appropriates money for a civilian personnel float, like the military's, that will allow individuals to take advantage of these career development opportunities.

III. Conclusion

PNSR Guiding Coalition member and former Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, Admiral James M. Loy, aptly summarized the system's problems and needs: "The focus must shift to national missions and outcomes. This will require strategic direction to produce unity of purpose and more collaboration to achieve unity of effort."

The United States government is fortunate to have a most talented and dedicated national security workforce. They are working incredibly hard and with unsurpassed dedication. Too much of their hard work, however, is squandered by a dysfunctional system. Working harder is no longer the answer. Our national security workforce deserves a better system, and the nation needs a better system. The human capital and other proposals included in PNSR's *Forging a New Shield* will substantially improve the system and its ability to support and enable our national security workforce.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer any questions you and your colleagues may have.