



INTERAGENCY REFORM: The Congressional Perspective

Congressman Geoff Davis

*Remarks as delivered by
Congressman Geoff Davis
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*Congressman Geoff Davis represents
Kentucky's 4th District. He holds a
B.S. from the U.S. Military Academy
at West Point. Congressman Davis
served as an Assault Helicopter Flight
Commander in the 82d Airborne Division
and later served in the Middle
East where he ran U.S. Army aviation
operations for peace enforcement
between Israel and Egypt.*

PHOTO: U.S. Navy Sailors take part
in an emergency replenishment working
party onboard the USN Whidbey
Island Class Dock Landing Ship USS
Tortuga while underway off the Gulf
Coast during the Hurricane Katrina
relief efforts, 3 September 2005. A
USN Sea Dragon helicopter awaits
directions in the background. (U.S.
Navy, JO3 Brian P. Seymour)

THANK YOU for the opportunity to join you today. National security organizational reform is of vital importance to our nation. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee and Co-chair of the House National Security Interagency Reform Working Group, furthering such reform is one of my highest priorities as a member of Congress. It is also a priority that is shared by distinguished colleagues on both sides of the aisle. This afternoon I would like to share my perspective on one essential component of a major reform initiative—national security interagency reform to ensure more effective interagency operations.

In beginning my discussion, it may be useful to define interagency operations in the simplest possible terms. The definition I prefer is “operations conducted by two or more federal departments or agencies in support of a national security mission.”

Significantly, these departments and agencies include those that are not commonly associated with overseas deployment for national security operations. Examples include the Departments of the Treasury, Justice, Agriculture, HHS, Transportation, Education, and Homeland Security.

Next, a simple definition of the problem is in order. Simply stated, our current interagency process is hamstrung and broken. There are regulatory, legislative, budgetary, resource, and cultural impediments to effective interagency operations. These problems are independent of personalities, policies, and particular presidential administrations. In order to protect the United States’ interests and citizens, it is critical to reform the executive and legislative branches to allow better coordination and communication between currently stove-piped departments and congressional committees. Indeed, our agency community needs to pass through an organizational and process transformation similar to the American manufacturing transformation of the 1980s and 1990s in order to make our agencies leaner, flatter, and more agile.

Effective interagency operations must be based upon the principle that the application of non-military, or “soft” power, should be effectively integrated with military power. A successfully integrated interagency process will empower the U.S. to more effectively deploy our non-military instruments of power abroad. This ability will allow the U.S. to more effectively fulfill its interests while reserving the use of lethal military force as a last resort. In fact, leaders and policy makers need two things:

- An overarching national strategy that frames the intent of all policy.
- A tool box of resources that can be configured – hopefully in a preventive way—to fulfill our strategic objectives.

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The interagency system was devised over 60 years ago for a different era and based on a very specific national strategy, when national security was primarily a function of military capabilities wielded by one department in overseas missions. At the time, major combat operations and nuclear deterrence were the principal focus of U.S. national security strategy. This system required only limited coordination of activities between vertically structured military and civilian departments and agencies.

Today, national security involves a much wider array of issues that can be addressed only with a broader set of capabilities that are highly synchronized and carefully calibrated. Since the end of the Cold War, the national security environment has changed in five significant ways:

- First, today’s environment is both less structured and more interdependent, making it less amenable to management through conventional military force alone.
- Second, the shared threats of the Cold War (including the threat of nuclear war) resulted in fixed alliances which, with the end of the Cold War, no longer constrain state behavior as they did in the last century.
- Third, states are often less susceptible to diplomatic pressure alone and the United States needs a wider array of tools to avoid resorting prematurely to major military force.
- Fourth, non-state actors and individuals wield influence that is far greater than any other time in human history.
- Fifth, globalization creates potential for transfer of disease, technology, ideas, and organization that never existed before.

In one sense, our global advances in technology and connectivity have the potential to cause us to regress to an era prior to the Treaty of Westphalia,

an era in which the acceptance of the nation-state was effectively codified.

This makes it imperative that the United States is able to interact effectively with institutions below the national level. For example, in Iraq, the United States must be able to interact effectively with provincial, local, and tribal leaders to accomplish security goals. We must prepare to do so in a dynamic, less predictable environment, where issues and geographic areas move rapidly from obscurity to strategic significance and national boundaries are highly permeable. We must have the ability to customize solutions on a diverse and massive scale—often in the same region. For example, a structure that may work in Mosul may not be suitable in Najaf, but each can fulfill the intent of the strategic objective.

Frequently, the United States will be unable to anticipate the exact capabilities it will require in advance of a crisis, necessitating the ability to rapidly matrix capabilities from different sources. The United States will no longer be able to separate national security from homeland security.

Many agencies are not conscious of or prepared to act in their national security roles. Many civilian departments and agencies do not believe they have a role in the national security system, and the cultures of these organizations produce few incentives for staff to participate in national security missions. These agencies often lack “expeditionary” capabilities. Even if they have the desire to help, they may be prevented from doing so by a combination of factors including personnel shortages, lack of other resources, lack of statutory authorizations, and regulatory constraints. They may also lack the ethos and structure required to sustain an embedded culture that enables continuous and adaptive operational planning, both long term and contingency.

There are also disparate departmental approaches to deployments and risk management. For example, the reluctance of departments and agencies to contribute

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personnel to the Coalition Provisional Authority, because of the factors I have cited, caused the CPA to operate throughout its tenure with approximately two-thirds of its required personnel.

Additionally, interagency operations are not governed by standard concepts and procedures. For example, during the 1994 invasion of Haiti, the lack of standard interagency concepts and procedures caused many departments and agencies to not even be aware other departments and agencies had arrived in the country.

Without standard concepts and procedures, interagency operations tend to be very ad hoc in nature. For example, Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in post-war Iraq, believed he reported to the President, through the Secretary of Defense, and did not want to be bogged down with the interagency process. CPA staff was ordered not to respond to requests for information from other departments or agencies. State Department employees detailed to the CPA were forced to conduct backchannel communications via personal Hotmail accounts, and National Security Advisor Rice's senior deputies checked the CPA web site every day to see what new orders Bremer had issued. Such ad hoc arrangements are enormously inefficient and liable to produce erratic outcomes.

The multinational coalition in Iraq suffered from a lack of unity of command. One result was a contentious relationship between the senior civilian official in Iraq (Paul Bremer) and the senior U.S. military commander in Iraq (Lieutenant General Sanchez). The fact that U.S. military forces in Iraq learned of the unilateral disbandment of the Iraqi Army—the cornerstone of all U.S. security planning—through a cable news report is indicative of the disconnect between the Coalition Provisional Authority and the U.S. military command.

We must also ensure that civilian agencies have the resources required for effective integration with the Department of Defense. For example, the State Department's Foreign Service is too small and is not designed to effectively meet the demands of interagency deployments. Nor is it prepared to support field efforts. Agencies like the Departments of Agriculture, Justice, and Treasury are not allocated resources or staffed with national security interagency operations in mind. Think what could have been done to deter the growth of criminal militias if

the Department of the Treasury had assisted in the rapid implementation of simple electronic banking systems to get money and payroll to the people of Iraq during the post-conflict stabilization period.

A National Security Act is needed to update the organization and procedures created by the National Security Act of 1947. Such overarching legislation has the potential to, in simplest possible terms, speed awareness and reaction to the spectrum of threats America faces. We must codify an adaptive approach that flattens, simplifies, and integrates the agencies of the executive branch and the committees of Congress.

While it would be premature for me to detail the specifics of a National Security Act, there are some basic considerations that should underlie legislation that is intended to amend the national security interagency system to make it more responsive to the strategic environment of the 21st century. In the interests of time, I will briefly address three areas that should be carefully considered with regard to any such future legislation.

First, we must ensure a system that assures proper planning guidance is issued to all departments and agencies that have national security roles, including specific objectives, roles, and responsibilities for fulfilling mission requirements. If done right, this planning guidance should enable subordinate departments and agencies to produce departmental and agency national security implementation plans. Additionally, operational plans and planning procedures must be constantly updated through regular scenario simulations that test ideas and processes in order to expose problems and constraints early so that the desired outcome can be achieved.

Second, we should require that personnel who are selected for senior executive service positions, in departments and agencies with national security roles, have the professional development via institutional training and/or operational assignments in agencies other than their own to effectively participate in the national security interagency system. There is a precedent for such professional development within DOD. The most talented officers are inculcated with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for effective participation in joint service operations. DOD's approach to joint service operations was reformed as a result of Goldwater-Nichols.

The reformed approach was exemplified by one scene from post-Hurricane Katrina recovery operations. Some of you may remember an Army assault helicopter battalion landing on a carrier in the Port of New Orleans. That would not have happened 20 years ago. That was the fruit of reform, including major changes in DOD personnel policies in support of joint service operations.

Third, we should strive to build regional expertise across departments and agencies to ensure a bench of personnel with the knowledge and skills required to accomplish departmental and agency missions in all regions of the world that are of national security significance. For example, we should consider better regional alignment between DOD and the State Department. An example of this issue is that the Commander, U.S. Central Command, must interface with four State Department bureaus, making coordination redundant and cumbersome.

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As my colleagues and I undertake the challenge of crafting reform legislation, I welcome the opportunity to interface with DOD, State, and DHS officials to gain their insights on the way ahead for reform.

While I am prepared to answer your questions, this afternoon I am primarily interested in getting your insights on this vital and complex issue. **MR**

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