

Background

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Department of Homeland Security Needs Under Secretary for Policy

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Unlike the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) currently lacks a high-level policy officer with staff, authority, and gravitas to articulate policy guidance throughout the department in order to implement the President's policies. DHS needs a more substantial capability to provide guidance for integrating current efforts, conducting program analysis, performing long-range strategic planning, and undertaking net assessments.

Specifically, although it does have some capabilities to perform these functions buried within its secretariat and directorates, DHS needs a senior policy officer with direct access to the DHS Secretary and with equivalent rank to other senior DHS leaders and to policymakers in other departments. Congress should therefore establish an Under Secretary for Policy with responsibilities and a staff drawn largely from existing assets within DHS. There should be little or no increase in DHS staff to implement this reform. The goal must be not to add more bureaucracy, but to make the existing agency more efficient.

Learning from the Past, Organizing for the Future

A strong policymaking arm is critical for large federal departments with complex missions. The experience of the Department of Defense offers an instructive example. The department maintains a robust policymaking capability directed by senior staff who enjoy ready access to departmental leadership and close working relationships with the senior

Talking Points

- The Department of Homeland Security needs a more substantial capability to provide guidance for integrating current efforts, conducting program analysis, performing long-range strategic planning, and undertaking net assessments.
- Congress should create an Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Policy who would also direct the Policy Planning Office and chair the Policy Review Board and the DHS Integration Board.
- The policy office should be established within the department's existing resources.
- Failure to adopt such innovations will leave the department's policymaking functions badly fragmented and, in the end, will work against Congress's goal of establishing an efficient, integrated, and effective steward of homeland security.

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staffs of other departments and with the National Security Council (NSC).

This is a relatively new phenomenon. As originally conceived in the National Security Act of 1947, the secretariat of the National Military Establishment (later renamed the Department of Defense) lacked any real policymaking capability. As a result, it proved totally ineffective at integrating the activities of the armed services.

In contrast, today's DoD has several structures that oversee policy analysis and development. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD[P]) is the principal staff assistant and adviser to both the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. These officers are responsible for formulating national security and defense policy and for integrating and overseeing DoD policy and plans to achieve national security objectives.

In particular, the USD(P) reviews operational and contingency plans; develops and coordinates DoD policy and positions for international negotiations on defense issues; assists the Secretary of Defense to develop U.S. national security and defense strategy, including advising about the resources and forces necessary to implement the strategy; and provides mid-range and long-range policy planning on strategic security matters and emerging national security issues.

The USD(P) supervises two offices that also promote policy planning and strategic analysis.

- The Office of Net Assessment provides analysis of long-range trends and assessments on future prospects for U.S. military capabilities in comparison with those of potential adversaries in order to identify future threats or opportunities for the United States.
- The Office of Force Transformation ensures that the U.S. military will possess an overwhelming and continuing competitive advantage in the future by serving as the advocate, focal point, and catalyst for defense transformation in DoD. The Director of Force Transformation is responsible for linking transformation to strategic functions, developing and applying appropriate decision rules and metrics, and promoting new military capabilities and innovative concepts.

In addition to the USD(P), the Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation, supervised by the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), provides independent analytic advice to the Secretary of Defense regarding alternative weapon systems and force structures, the development and evaluation of defense program alternatives, and the cost-effectiveness of defense systems. Its several hundred analysts evaluate alternative plans, programs, forces, personnel levels, and budget submissions in relation to projected threats, allied contributions, estimated costs, resource constraints, and U.S. defense objectives and priorities; evaluate programs to ensure adherence to DoD policies and operational requirements; and develop and promote improved analytical tools, data, and methods for analyzing national security planning, the effectiveness of U.S. and foreign military forces, and the allocation of resources.

DoD leaders can also draw on the Defense Policy Board, which consists of approximately 30 individuals (primarily from the private sector) with distinguished backgrounds in national security affairs. The board meets periodically to provide independent expert advice about both short-term defense issues and long-term questions relevant to defense planning. The position of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy demonstrates the importance and utility of having an office that can integrate the various distinct mission areas within DoD and provide channels of communication between them.

Policy Analysis Within DHS

DHS, whose roles and missions are equally as vital to the security of the United States as those of DoD, lacks equivalent policymaking resources. At present, the policy analysis components within DHS are scattered across several directorates and are highly compartmentalized. In part, this reflects the department's origins.

When DHS was formed in March 2003 from dozens of existing U.S. government agencies and programs, it absorbed several legacy policy analysis units from its new component agencies. In addition, the patent need for policy analysis led some DHS components to form their own small policy analysis units. For example:

- The Office of Plans, Programs, and Budgets in the Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate establishes overall priorities and oversees research and development activities within the directorate. It also provides guidance for how S&T should interact with other DHS entities, but its purview is limited only to S&T issues.
- The Border and Transportation Security Directorate (BTS) has an Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning who serves as the principal adviser for policy development to the BTS Under Secretary. This BTS Office of Policy Planning consists of some 30 policy professionals, but they provide guidance only on issues of direct concern to the directorate.
- Within BTS, the Office of Transportation Security Policy, located in the Transportation Security Administration, and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement office also have their own small, narrowly focused policy planning units.

Because the proliferation of policy centers within DHS has only magnified the challenge of forging coherent guidance and integrated programs, consolidating many of these activities would probably make sense. While it is likely that there will always be a place for a few key policy shops in various agencies within DHS to focus on narrow functional, technical, or specialized issues, these offices should not be developing policies in isolation. However, today's DHS lacks a strong policy leader within the department to integrate these activities. There is currently no capability to get DHS to speak with one voice.

The DHS Secretary also maintains a small policy office under the supervision of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy. This office is charged with supervising both current and long-range policies across the diverse programs of the entire department. It has

few institutional mechanisms to support its efforts. DHS does not have a formal policymaking review process, nor does it have a Policy Review Board.

The White House's Homeland Security Council (HSC) does have some policy planning and related missions as part of its portfolios, but its primary responsibility is to ensure coordination of homeland security-related activities (including the development of agency budget proposals) across the federal government.¹ Another external body, the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC), does provide advice and recommendations directly to the Secretary of DHS, but its 20-odd members neither work full-time on department matters nor are typically immersed in the details of DHS programs.² Neither the HSC nor the HSAC provides sufficient support to meet DHS policy-planning needs. When compared to the policy-making and analysis capabilities of the DoD, DHS comes up woefully short.

DHS currently has many distinct functional areas that are unable to exchange information effectively and efficiently. Creating a new Under Secretary for Policy would allow the multiple mini-bureaucracies operating throughout the department—as well as possibly some senior management positions—to be cut or consolidated.

Building a DHS Office for an Under Secretary for Policy

The roles and missions of policy analysis units within other departments suggest the core functions for an Under Secretary of DHS policy analysis. Specifically, the Under Secretary would:

- **Coordinate DHS policy.** The Under Secretary would establish and direct a formal policymaking process for the department and oversee a Policy Making Board. He or she would not be

1. The Homeland Security Council, like the National Security Council and the National Economic Council, is a committee of Cabinet secretaries and other senior federal officials involved in homeland security. Its members include the President; the Vice President; the Secretaries of Defense, Health and Human Services, Transportation, and the Treasury; the Attorney General; the Directors of the FBI and the CIA; and other high-ranking agency officials. For more on the contrast between the two bodies, see Ivo H. Daalder *et al.*, *Assessing the Department of Homeland Security* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2002), pp. 106–108.
2. The HSAC draws its members from state and local governments, first responder communities, the private sector, federally funded research and development centers, and academia.

responsible for administering policies. Policy execution should be the function of other DHS components that have the resources and administrative structures for this task.

- **Conduct long-range policy planning.** The Under Secretary's staff would conduct long-range strategic planning, including "what-if" scenario-based planning—a task other DHS components invariably neglect as they grapple with daily crises and other pressing short-term demands.
- **Prepare critical strategic documents.** The Under Secretary's office would help compose the department's most important documents. These include not only its vision and mission statements, but also the major speeches of the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, and other top DHS officials. The planners also would assume a lead role in reassessing (and, if necessary, revising) the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* and the department's own overarching strategic plan.³
- **Conduct program analysis.** The Under Secretary would assist with DHS programming. In particular, his or her analysts would evaluate ongoing and proposed programs (including planned research and development efforts) in terms of overall DHS priorities and resources. On the other hand, budgeting and fiscal matters would remain with the Under Secretary for Management.
- **Assess departmental efforts.** Staff of the Under Secretary would perform oversight on the Secretary's behalf by evaluating how well DHS components were implementing the Secretary's directives. As part of this process, and to promote accountability, the office would maintain a record of all the Secretary's impor-

tant decisions. These functions would be distinct from the responsibilities of the DHS Office of the Inspector General.

- **Prepare net assessments.** The Under Secretary's planners would conduct periodic net assessments and research specific issues of interest to the Secretary and other DHS leaders that cut across the department's components or for which the leadership desires another opinion.

First Priorities

Several tasks should be put on the proposed Under Secretary's plate immediately:

- **Promote integration of department programs and activities.** The Under Secretary must play a lead role in promoting unity of effort across DHS. Like the Departments of State and Defense, DHS has a complex organizational structure with many different elements, each with its own priorities, perspectives, and unique missions. By developing strategies, writing speeches and other seminal texts, and reviewing the department's annual budget request, a high-level policy analysis unit could help the Secretary maintain coherence by providing DHS components with clear goals, periodic assessments, and continuous supervision. The planners could evaluate the detailed implementation programs and performance metrics of each DHS component to ensure integration and complementarity. They also could promote the sharing of best practices and lessons learned.
- **Start thinking about the future.** The Under Secretary needs to use long-term planning and net assessment to help the department become more proactive. After all, a main task of DHS is to implement a systematic, comprehensive,

3. The now-defunct White House Office of Homeland Security issued the latest (and, thus far, only) version of the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* in July 2002. The strategy discusses the most important goals of homeland security and what contributions the federal government, state and local authorities, the private sector, and ordinary citizens can make toward achieving them. Like the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* will be regularly revised. DHS's first strategic plan was issued in February 2004 and will need to be updated periodically. See The White House, *National Strategy for Homeland Security* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Homeland Security, July 2002), at www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/book/ (August 9, 2004), and *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: National Security Council, September 2002), at www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf (August 9, 2004).

and strategic program to reduce U.S. vulnerability to terrorist attacks. The planners could think ahead about how developments in technology, global politics, and other trends during the next decade would present both challenges and opportunities for U.S. homeland security. They could then design strategies, plans, and programs to manage these challenges and exploit these opportunities.

- **Promote the wise allocation of resources.** The policy planning staff would promote the optimal allocation of department resources (e.g., money and people). The analysts would develop plans and concepts that would define how ongoing initiatives cohere into an integrated long-range strategy. With respect to specific programs, the planners would help DHS components to establish lists of prioritized deliverables, set deadlines for achieving them, and develop and employ metrics (such as benchmarks and other measurable outcomes) to assess progress and guide changes in strategy and tactics.⁴
- **Establish a network.** The Under Secretary's analysts would participate in outreach efforts with groups and people outside of DHS. An important responsibility for the planners would be to work with their counterparts in other government agencies, the HSC, the NSC, and international partners to ensure that all government-wide strategies relating to homeland security reflect DHS concerns.

The policy staff must also begin to cultivate long-term contacts with homeland security specialists in academia, think tanks, and other non-governmental organizations. These contacts would enhance DHS's ability to incorporate the insights of experts from the private and nonprofit sectors. By drawing on a wider range of perspectives, the policy unit would also counter "group think" and reduce the chances of another surprise terrorist attack similar to 9/11.

Conclusion

DHS should establish a policy planning staff. To ensure its independence and direct access to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, the new office should be situated outside of the department's five existing directorates. To enhance its weight within the department, the office should be headed by a Director for Policy Planning.

Core staff of the new office should be created by combining existing offices within the secretariat and utilizing staff positions and personnel from within DHS's component organizations. This will minimize the various policy and planning bureaucracies within DHS and allow for better communication and integration. Again, the goal is not to make the department bigger or to add bureaucracy. In fact, it is just the opposite.

The policy office should serve to make DHS operate more efficiently as a flatter, leaner organization. To that end, the policy office should be established within the department's existing resources. Its staff should consist of a mixture of career DHS employees and people on rotation from other government agencies, qualified individuals from state and local governments, and experts from the private and non-governmental sectors.

Meanwhile, Congress should create an Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Policy. The Under Secretary would also direct the Policy Planning Office and chair both the Policy Review Board and the DHS Integration Board. Failure to adopt such innovations will leave the department's policymaking functions badly fragmented and, in the end, will work against Congress's goal of establishing an efficient, integrated, and effective steward of homeland security.

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4. The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 requires government departments and agencies to establish strategic and annual goals, measure performance, and report on the extent to which they are meeting these objectives.