

Heritage Lectures

No. 831

Delivered February 27, 2004



Published by The Heritage Foundation

April 30, 2004

Thinking About the Imperatives of Defense Transformation

The Honorable Paul Wolfowitz

I appreciate what the organizers at Heritage have done to bring together such an extraordinary series of panels on what I think is one of the most important subjects facing the country today—and certainly facing the Defense Department.

Background

Maybe I could help set the stage for today's dialogue by recalling how we got here and some of the actions that have been taking place in the last three years during my time at the Department of Defense with Don Rumsfeld. In fact, it's been almost three years to the day since President Bush gave DoD our marching orders on transformation.

Within a month of his inauguration, the President acted to fulfill his campaign pledges to protect the United States against what he called "the dangers of a new era." He said, "At my request, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has begun a comprehensive review of the U.S. military, the state of our strategy, the structure of our forces, the priorities of our budget."

The President went on, "I have given him a broad mandate to challenge the status quo as we design a new architecture for the defense of America and its allies." And he added, "We do not know yet the exact shape of our future, but we do know the direction we must begin to travel"—a direction that he then described with words like "lighter," "more lethal," "easier to deploy and sustain," and "pinpoint accuracy."

Talking Points

- We have continued to transform America's defense, even as we wage deadly war on our enemies. The resulting changes have involved a full range of military capabilities, including hardware, doctrine, communications, organization, and training.
- We have to continue to the transformation that's been going on. We've got to take jointness to a new and higher level. Technology permits it. The organization needs to get out of the way of it.
- We need to think about transformation in the context of the global war on terrorism. One area that we have neglected, as a country and as a military, is the area of irregular warfare.
- I would also urge us to think around the corner to the ugly things that might happen in the future: to "what" might threaten us as opposed to "who" might threaten us, which is my shorthand for a capabilities-based strategy as opposed to a threat-based strategy.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/hl831.cfm

Produced by the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis
Institute for International Studies

Published by The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20002-4999
(202) 546-4400 heritage.org

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

There was, moreover, an urgency to the President's directive, even in early 2001. As he put it, "We must use this time well. We must seize this moment."

In fact, time was shorter than we knew, as we learned just seven months later on September 11, 2001.

The Priority of Transformation

In the wake of that terrible attack on America, some people said the global war on terrorism meant that transformation had to be put on the back burner. Don Rumsfeld thought otherwise. He said, "The global war on terror has made transforming an even more urgent priority. Our experience on September 11th made clear that our adversaries are transforming the ways in which they will threaten our people. We cannot stand still."

And we haven't. We have continued to transform America's defense, even as we wage deadly war on our enemies. The resulting changes have involved a full range of military capabilities, including hardware, doctrine, communications, organization, and training.

The most obvious changes—those that seem to make the headlines—are those that involve systems and platforms. I will talk in a few minutes about the tendency to focus too much on platforms as a measure of transformation.

More than 15 years ago, I was very struck when Andy Marshall first introduced me to the fact, which I found startling at the time, that it wasn't the Germans who invented tanks. It wasn't the Germans who first fielded tanks in warfare. In fact, it was the British and the French who first fielded them during World War I.

The Germans didn't outpace the British and the French in the conception of tanks. At the time of the battle in France, the British and the French had as many tanks in the field as the Germans. And yet, because the Germans had figured out how to organize and use tanks in a way that transformed warfare, in truly stunning fashion, they were able to defeat Britain and France in the space of four weeks.

So it isn't just about technology. It isn't just about platforms. It's about much more than that.

But when it comes to platforms, let me also emphasize that it isn't just about how many obsolete or outdated systems you kill. Sometimes, when I

read the press, that seems to be some people's measure of transformation. By that measure, some of our European allies (who seem to be taking their defense budgets down to zero) would be in the lead of transformation. That's not the kind of transformation we're trying to do in the Defense Department.

Resource Shifts

We are trying to shift resources, and we're doing it, I think, in some very significant ways. But it's not simply to go *out* of systems that are less needed; it's to go *into* systems that are more needed.

One example is the cancellation, in 2001, of DD21, the Navy's future surface combatant program. This program incorporated some truly brilliant technology, but that no longer looked like the right ship for this new era. Now, instead of producing a single ship class, the Navy's renamed DD(X) program will produce a family of advanced technology surface combatants that are able to meet a range of threats and mission needs, including the Littoral Combat Ship. This ship will enable us to operate more effectively in close-in coastal waters—a mission that looks increasingly important and difficult in the future.

Another example was the President's decision that, in the post-Cold War era, we didn't need the same level of nuclear force that we had in the past. Four Trident submarines—as someone described them, workhorses of the Cold War—were demobilized and converted into conventional cruise missile carriers. More importantly, I am finding that, as the Navy begins to bring these ships into initial operational capability, the enormous volume that the Trident provides allows Naval Special Forces to think about using submarines in ways that weren't conceivable in the past.

Similarly, the decision to cancel the Crusader artillery system has enabled us to move those resources without cutting Army indirect fire systems. In fact, since the cancellation of Crusader, the total investment in Army indirect fire has actually gone up.

I had a chance to visit the Army Artillery School in Fort Sill a few weeks ago, and I was very pleased with what the Army is doing with that increased investment. It is accelerating things like the Excalibur artillery round—a round that can give us 10-meter accuracy in artillery. I think that kind of accuracy in artillery will have the same kind of

transforming effect that we saw with naval cruise missiles or air-delivered bombs.

It's led the Army to accelerate the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System: a rocket system that permits us to deploy artillery—and, eventually, very accurate artillery—in C-130s and extend the reach of indirect fire into new areas.

As Secretary Rumsfeld said at the time of that decision, it was not a decision about a single weapon system, but about a strategy of warfare that drives the choices we must make about how best to prepare the nation's total forces for the future.

A similar analysis went into the Army's very recent decision to cancel the Comanche helicopter program and shift those resources into other areas of Army aviation, the net result of which is some 800 additional helicopters that will be bought over the course of a five-year defense program in place of the 120 Comanches.

It's a complicated issue, but it reflects the fact that Comanche was first discussed in 1978 on the drawing boards. It's been 26 years, and it's not surprising that the world is a little different today. The radar threat to helicopters, which is what Comanche was meant to counter, is not the primary focus. We can, with other helicopter systems, accomplish the Army's missions much more effectively, and that's what this decision was about.

Organizational Change

As I said earlier, transformation is about a good deal more than just platforms. It's about more than just technology. In fact, I would say it's not even primarily about technology. Changes enabled by new networking and information technology have taken the potential of joint operations to a new and unprecedented level, and that is more than just a platform change. It requires a change in the way we organize, and it requires changes in organizational culture.

Indeed, I've said sometimes that if you want to look at transformation, a great example of transformation is the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which has helped to transform the way we approach jointness in the Department of Defense. I remember that when I began working as Under Secretary for Defense Secretary Richard Cheney, it was a rather new innovation.

The full impact of it could barely be glimpsed. We've seen it dramatically, though, in the course of

the last two years of war, when jointness, combined with new communications technologies and networking technologies, has allowed us to combine disparate geographic forces and provide precision air support to such strange formations as the Northern Alliance in northern Afghanistan. This is something that I don't think could have been contemplated when Goldwater-Nichols was enacted—but something that would probably not have been possible without that landmark legislation.

That combination, in fact, enabled American ground forces in Iraq to achieve what the President has rightly characterized as “one of the swiftest advances of heavy arms in the history of warfare.” It also made possible the use of Special Forces on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

We saw that in Afghanistan, where Special Forces literally rode on horseback. I had the honor and privilege of meeting with some of the young kids who had gone in during the very early days of the war. At their first meeting with General Rashid Dostum, they told me they weren't sure whether he was going to kill them or embrace them. Fortunately, after the first embrace, they were then told to get on horseback. Only one of them had ever been on a horse in his life, and there they were on a cavalry charge—and a very short time after that, calling in B-52 strikes.

It has led me to observe over and over again that we have this amazing combination of a 19th century horse cavalry and 50-year-old B-52s, combined with modern communications into a true 21st century capability.

Don Rumsfeld was asked in one of his famous press conferences what he had in mind by bringing the horse cavalry back into modern warfare. He said, “It's all part of our transformation plan.”

Technological Shifts

The fusion of human intelligence with electronic intelligence is occurring at an unprecedented rate. It is made possible by these information technologies and by concepts like chatrooms—something that all of your teenagers know about. For those of us over 50, sometimes we do and sometimes we don't, but it's amazing to get briefed on what those young 20-year-olds are doing in AWACS and other crews: integrating multiple chatrooms during the course of both wars. It's enabled us to develop new

tactics in Iraq for force protection to counter threats like improvised explosive devices.

It's also having an impact on organizations. Who would have imagined that you could have had a conventional tank company being flown to an improvised desert strip in C-17s and placed under the command of a lieutenant colonel from Special Forces? I don't think the Army would have even thought about that before. And, of course, the regular Army are proud to point out that this lieutenant colonel proceeded to dump his first tank into a deep hole—and never got it out.

But the fact is that the rest of the tanks under Special Forces command—for the first time, I think, in our military history—were able to block the road from Baghdad to Tikrit at an early stage of the war: something that would not have been possible in an earlier era.

The ability of different units, across different services, to function jointly is also leading to a revolution in training. It wasn't so long ago that I heard some very senior generals (and very smart ones, too) observing that the tank commander really doesn't need to know what the guy in the cockpit is seeing. Well, that era has passed, and we're now looking at how to integrate tank training with Air Force training.

We are persuaded that trying to create a new joint national training center was the wrong way to go. We have some absolutely incredible individual service training centers, but it's possible—again, thanks to virtual technology and modern information technology—to combine what's being done at Nellis with what's being done next door at Fort Irwin and in the various other service training centers around the country. This will be called not a joint national training “center,” but a joint national training “capability,” which I think will bring jointness into the training area in a dramatic and important way.

Our transformation also has to do with how we manage the Department of Defense. As Secretary Rumsfeld put it:

In an age when terrorists move information at the speed of an e-mail, money at the speed of a wire transfer, and people at the speed of a commercial jetliner, the Defense Department is bogged down in the micromanagement and bureaucratic processes of the industrial age—not the information age. Some of our

difficulties are self-imposed.... Some are the result of law and regulation. Together they have created a culture that too often stifles innovation.

We're trying to change some of that, and we've had some great help from Congress in last year's Defense Authorization bill and from the civilian personnel system in Defense. It has made important changes to Civil Service rules that we think will allow us to replace some old and archaic procedures in the personnel area with a culture that encourages innovation and intelligent risk-taking.

Tradition vs. Transformation

Taken together, we are moving from a framework that focused in the past on known threats to a more flexible framework based on the capability to defend ourselves from shifting and uncertain threats; from a focus simply on programs and platforms to a focus on results; from segmented information and closed information architecture to network information and open architectures; from stovepiped competitive organizations to aligned organizations with common and shared objectives; and from what is called “deliberate planning”—which is to say planning done in such excruciating detail that it takes four to ten years to complete a plan, by which time the conditions for which the plan was created have totally changed—to what we call “adaptive planning.”

There's a very important change hidden behind those two terms, and, of course, transformational change doesn't come easily to any organization, especially to military institutions that have to rely on tradition. I think one of the great strengths of our individual services is the extraordinary tradition that goes with each of them.

There's a wonderful World War II example of tradition run amok. It involved the effort to look at how to increase the rate of artillery fire in the British army. The British called in a time-motion expert to study the gun crews at work, and he was struck by something that he couldn't put his finger on. He took slow motion pictures of the soldiers as they loaded, aimed, and fired, and he discovered that just a moment before firing, two members of the gun crew would cease all activity and come to attention for a period of three seconds. Then the gun would be fired. He was puzzled by this, as was an old artillery colonel with whom he shared the film. All at

once the old colonel brightened up, and he said, "I have it. They're holding the horses."

We can find any number of such stories to illustrate the point, but I want to stress that our military leaders today have embraced change as a necessity—painful though it sometimes is—just as the Army just did with the decision on Comanche.

I can't say enough about the enormous quality of the current leadership. I've had the privilege, over many years, of knowing many chiefs of services and many chairmen of the Joint Chiefs. I don't know of a finer group than Chairman Dick Myers; Vice Chairman Pete Pace; new Chief of Staff of the Army, Pete Schoomaker, who gave up a very comfortable and well-earned retirement to come back to active duty; Admiral Vernon Clark, the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations]; General Mike Hagee, the Commandant of the Marine Corps; and General John Jumper, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

It is an outstanding group, and their commitment is matched by our combatant commanders in the field, including that great hero Tommy Franks, who put together two extraordinary innovative battle plans for Afghanistan and for Iraq in record time. It also includes his successor out at CENTCOM, John Abizaid, whose leadership in the continuing war has been so impressive.

But most of all, I can't conclude anything on this subject without mentioning our people. Our people are the key to everything, and our people are incredible—both officers and enlisted men. I think one of the great, exciting things about the American military is, in fact, the quality of the noncommissioned officers.

I remember when General Sergei Akhromeyev, a former Marshal of the Soviet Union, first visited the United States. He was impressed by our technology, but he was stunned by our sergeants. Other militaries just don't delegate authority down to that level: I guess they can't.

I am stunned by the sheer ingenuity of our soldiers in Iraq. Their courage we know about: The ingenuity is amazing.

I remember walking around the tents in Mosul, in northern Iraq, back in July with this young Army captain who commanded the company that had security for the town square. As we passed one side

of the square where the butcher shops were, he explained to me that, for the butchers of Mosul, liberation meant that they could now slaughter sheep in the town square and leave the carcasses in the street. Of course, in the old days, they would have simply dealt with this by shooting a couple of butchers, and the rest would have fallen into line. That's exactly what we are not there to do.

So what did this young captain do? He organized an association of butchers of Mosul and negotiated with the butchers. He explained to them that it was not acceptable to leave the carcasses in the street, and the problem was soon cleaned up. I jokingly asked him, "Was there a course at West Point in which they taught you how to organize a butcher's association?" And, of course, the answer was, "No."

We asked a similar question of a Marine lieutenant colonel who was in charge of one of the key Shia cities in the south. I think it was Karbala. His answer was, "I learned it in sixth grade."

There is something about American ingenuity and American civic culture, combined with American military courage, that is producing incredible results in Iraq and Afghanistan—and around the world—and our whole transformation rests on that ingenuity and civic culture.

Transformation: Next Steps

I leave you with three thoughts about where transformation should go.

First of all, it has to continue. As Secretary Rumsfeld said, the war is not an excuse to delay transformation: It's a reason to accelerate it. Indeed, in some respects, change comes more easily in wartime because people understand the need for change. I imagine it didn't take long to point out to those British artillerymen that it wasn't terribly efficient, in wartime, to stand and wait, holding the horses that weren't there anymore. But we have to continue to the transformation that's been going on. We've got to take jointness to a new and higher level. Technology permits it. The organization needs to get out of the way of it.

Second, and very importantly, I think we need to think about transformation in the context of the global war on terrorism. I think one area that we have neglected for a long time, as a country and as a military, is the area of irregular warfare. There are

many dimensions to this. I will say, in my experience over the last two or three years, that the key one is our ability to work with indigenous forces: to train and to organize them, to equip them, and to fight alongside them or with them. It is the key to success in Afghanistan; it is the key to success in Iraq. We are making remarkable progress in both of those countries, but we're doing it somewhat against our own culture, and we're having to learn on the run.

Remember, it was General Abizaid who said to me that for our regular tank units, it's been difficult to think about training, taking Iraqi forces, and using them. And you can understand why. We'll never have Iraqi forces that can do a complicated warfare maneuver of the sort that we train for out at Fort Irwin.

I remember being in Afghanistan and visiting the Afghan National Army. There was a Special Forces site, and they were doing training. I asked someone afterwards: "Special Forces are stretched thin around the world. Training ought to be fairly simple. Why can't we have some regular Army—or even Marine Corps—people here doing this training?"

The explanation that was given to me made a lot of sense. He said, "We need people doing this training who understand what a Third World Army is capable of, who are prepared to live with that standard, and don't insist on training to the standards of the U.S. military."

It's an interesting notion that transformation in the area of irregular warfare means understanding how to lower those incredible standards to which

we hold our armed forces. It's a complicated world out there, but a key to winning this war on terrorism, I am convinced—and certainly in Afghanistan and Iraq—is getting the people who are on our side able to fight with us.

That also involves another kind of transformation: taking advantage of the extraordinary resources in this country that come from our immigrant population. This is on the civilian bureaucracy side as much as it is on the military side. It is still a lot more difficult, in my view, than it should be to bring Afghan-Americans or Iraqi-Americans into the American military or the American Defense Department. Stop and think: It's pretty obvious how valuable those people can be in the context of fighting today. You realize that that's a transformation that needs to take place.

Finally, I would also urge us to think around the corner to the ugly things that might happen in the future: to "what" might threaten us as opposed to "who" might threaten us, which is my shorthand for a capabilities-based strategy as opposed to a threat-based strategy. I think biodefense is something that has to take a much higher priority in the Defense Department and in the country. It's a horrible thing to contemplate. It is difficult to deal with. But that difficulty is not an excuse for not thinking about it.

—*The Honorable Paul Wolfowitz is Deputy Secretary of Defense. These remarks were delivered at the Conference on Defense Transformation sponsored by The Heritage Foundation.*