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## Fusing Homeland Defense Competency

*The Honorable Paul McHale*

During the nearly five years since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Department of Defense has fundamentally reassessed the domestic threat environment, incorporating the brutal challenge of transnational terrorism into that assessment. As a consequence, we have dramatically reoriented the military defenses of the United States to defeat both traditional, nation-state threats and asymmetric threats associated most frequently with transnational terrorists.

Our terrorist adversaries see the United States homeland as the preeminent battle space in a global conflict. By attacking here, their intent is to shape and degrade our political will. They have little hope of prevailing in a war of attrition. That is not their intent. Their intent is to inflict sufficient carnage so that we back down, choose not to fight, and are provoked into an absence of political will that would serve—from their point of view—as a catalyst for our ultimate defeat.

In my judgment, that hard and brutal reality must therefore define and guide U.S. military contingency planning for decades to come. Let me just say that I see this challenge as one that extends far beyond the ultimate defeat of al-Qaeda. I believe that it is characteristic of conflict in the 21st century and perhaps beyond, that with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their easy transportability, the desire to acquire (and perhaps the actual acquisition) of weapons of mass destruction at some point by transnational terrorists, the kind of threat that we faced initially at the hands of al-Qaeda will likely be inherited by other transnational groups, certainly

### Talking Points

- Port security should be the last layer of an effective maritime defense, not the first layer. It should be our intent through improved intelligence to identify a maritime threat at a distance, to interdict that threat.
- In the arena of land attacks, we have substantial capabilities including quick reaction forces and consequence management capabilities to deal with the outcomes of a terrorist attack should the terrorists be successful in penetrating our defenses.
- In our planning process we must come together in order to anticipate the operational and tactical requirements able to be met by all federal agencies, in partnership with state and local competencies, public and private sector, civilian and military, so that we fuse that national competency into a well-prepared plan oriented toward each one of the 15 national planning scenarios.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
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throughout the rest of my life, and I anticipate throughout most of yours.

### Post-9/11 Threat Assessment

And so let me go back and talk about where we were on 9/11, about the intervening events that bring us up to today, and then give you a sense of where I think we are headed in confronting that kind of transnational terrorist threat.

For those of you who read the 9/11 Commission Report in some detail, you probably caught buried in a footnote the rather stark recognition that on the morning of 9/11, NORAD, our air defense command, was conducting a previously scheduled exercise. The scenario for that exercise involved a Soviet-style bomber attack upon the United States, more than a decade after the Soviet Union ceased to exist as a country. The primary scenario driving our air defense was a Soviet-style bomber attack. Later that morning it became painfully clear that the threat in the 21st century, while it continues to reflect the air capabilities of nation-states that may be hostile to the United States, also must now reflect, in terms of our assessment, the unconventional, the asymmetric capability that resulted in four commercial airplanes being commandeered by terrorists and used as weapons platforms to ultimately produce the loss of some 3,000 innocent lives. That, too, is now part of the threat environment.

We recognized, right after 9/11, that we needed to dramatically reorient our defenses in order to effectively deter, and, when necessary, defeat that kind of terrorist, asymmetric threat. The first thing we had to do was come up with a strategic framework. There is an old saying that “If you don’t know your destination, any route will do.” We needed to provide an intellectual, documentary framework, in which we could develop the homeland security, homeland defense, and civil support capabilities of our nation, to include the department that I represent—the Department of Defense (DOD).

I think we have done pretty well in that regard. I remember going to the Army War College and listening to extended, serious debate as to what homeland security is, what homeland defense is, and when one transitions into the other. The discussion at that point was pretty basic, in terms of

the strategic and the intellectual framework that would provide guidance to our evolving, operational capabilities.

We knew that 3,000 people had died; we knew that al-Qaeda would attack again if we gave them an opportunity; we recognized that homeland defense begins overseas. We projected power to Afghanistan, and then ultimately to other locations—most especially Iraq—to keep our terrorist adversaries on the defensive so that we could seize the operational initiative. But we also knew that all of that activity had to have a framework. I think that over the last five years, that intellectual framework has developed pretty well. We have the right thoughts, and I think we have expressed them reasonably well in documents like the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, the *National Security Strategy*, the new *National Response Plan* (which is really a dramatic revision of the earlier federal response plan), and ultimately the strategy that we produced within my own shop, our Department of Defense *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support*.

We did not see strategic assessment and evolving operational capability in a linear time frame. In other words, one was not going to lead to the other, sequentially. We recognized intuitively that certain operational capabilities were required because we had been attacked and we knew almost instinctively that some of those capabilities had to be established. As an example, since shortly after 9/11, we have had military Quick Reaction Forces available for domestic deployment under the circumstances in which it might be determined that civilian law enforcement could not provide an adequate counterbalance in order to defeat an impending terrorist attack. I am not sure that there was a great deal of cerebral analysis that went into the creation of those Quick Reaction Forces. We just knew, at a very elemental level, that in light of what had happened on 9/11, we must provide increased capabilities to augment and reinforce the primary capabilities found within civilian law enforcement, that we needed soldiers, sometimes Marines, on alert for domestic deployment, for instance, to defeat an al-Qaeda attack on a domestic nuclear power plant. We knew that critical infrastructure

protection might require not just law enforcement capabilities, but perhaps military capabilities as well. And so we began concurrently developing operational capabilities, even as we developed the intellectual framework that put all those pieces together into a coherent whole.

That transition from strategic theory to operational reality continues most especially in the area of CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosives) consequence management. Early on, it was recognized by the Secretary of Defense that the structure of our department reflected a “Cold War orientation” while confronting a terrorist reality. And so Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, at the direction of President George W. Bush, modified the Unified Command Plan and created a new Combat Command, United States Northern Command.

It was recognized that in a world in which the terrorists saw the United States as the preeminent battle space in a global conflict, we needed to have a single military commander who would take charge of all of our forces located within that geographic area—the United States homeland—in order to ensure the effectiveness of command and control and the integration of military capabilities for the defeat of al-Qaeda, in the approach to the United States homeland, or perhaps within our own country. We are extremely fortunate that the Commander of the United States Northern Command is an officer of exceptional talent, Admiral Tim Keating. I think the Good Lord looks out for our nation, and that we have at a critical moment in time, a superb commander in exactly the right billet.

Not long after the Secretary of Defense created the U.S. Northern Command, the Congress of the United States created the office that I now hold. In the National Defense Authorization Act of 2003, passed late in 2002, it was recognized that there needed to be a civilian who would have supervisory responsibility within the Department of Defense for all the homeland defense activities of the Department. And so that position, with that mandate, was created by law and I was very privileged when Secretary Rumsfeld asked me to take that job. It has been a challenging and extremely rewarding experience.

## Current Operational Capabilities

Let me talk to you briefly about our operational capabilities, capabilities that for the most part did not exist on the morning of September 11, 2001. When President Bush proposed his budget for fiscal year 2007, he included \$17 billion in homeland defense funding, to include such things as Operation Noble Eagle. On the morning of 9/11 we did not have fighter aircraft patrolling our domestic air space or fighter aircraft on very short strip alert, prepared to deploy into our domestic air space in order to defeat a transnational terrorist threat.

We have had that capability ever since then. As we gather here today, we have a classified, but very substantial, number of fighter aircraft on alert at diverse geographic locations throughout the United States ready to deploy and intercept any terrorist attack within the domestic air space of the United States. We routinely have aircraft on combat air patrols—again, randomly selected in terms of geographic location—that change every day. We want the bad guys to have to worry about an ever-changing air defense organization so that we introduce uncertainty into our terrorist adversaries’ planning process. We want them to know that we have those planes on alert, and we are prepared to use them under difficult, even tragic, circumstances in order to defeat a terrorist threat of the type that we experienced on 9/11.

We also anticipate, as then we did not in any substantial degree, the possibility that terrorists might approach the coasts of the United States, moving through the maritime domain, through the commons, moving especially a weapon of mass destruction into a United States port. Port security should be the last layer of an effective maritime defense, not the first layer. It should be our intent through improved intelligence to identify a maritime threat at a distance and to interdict that threat. We call these Maritime Intercept Operations (MIO), and we can conduct an MIO on the high seas, an MIO of the type that we, for instance, plan to execute as part of the Proliferation Security Initiative in some of the more distant parts of the world. We need to be prepared to identify and approach a maritime threat, most especially a terrorist threat, to anticipate the possibility that a ter-

rorist threat will employ a weapon of mass destruction to include a nuclear device or a radiological device. We must have forces prepared, trained, supported, and able to move rapidly to interdict that WMD threat at a distance, on the high seas, so that before we even get into the issue of port security we have defeated that threat at a distance from the coast of the United States. Port security is vitally important to our nation, but I would much prefer to locate that dirty bomb 500 nautical miles off of the coast, than to discover its presence in the port of Long Beach.

### Strategic Assumptions

Finally, in the land area, we have substantial capabilities including those Quick Reaction Forces that I mentioned earlier, and consequence management capabilities to deal with the outcomes of a terrorist attack should the terrorist be successful in penetrating our defenses. The assumptions of our strategy, when we published it in June of last year, were meant to be sobering. The assumptions in the *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* were meant to be blunt. Frankly, they were even sharper in earlier drafts than they ended up in the final document and we knocked off a few of the rough edges, but these words are not characteristic of a carefully coordinated document where ordinarily the result of that coordination is mush.

Let me read to you the assumptions of our strategy. They are meant to grab your attention. The strategy makes the following key assumptions. First, the United States will continue to face traditional military challenges emanating from hostile nation-states. Nation-state adversaries will incorporate asymmetric threats into their broader strategies of competition and confrontation with the United States. Terrorists will seek, and potentially gain, surreptitious entry into the United States to conduct mass-casualty attacks against Americans on U.S. soil.

The next assumption, I believe, should, through the strength of its sobriety, burn itself into your consciousness. It reads as follows: "Terrorists and/or rogue states will attempt multiple, simultaneous mass-casualty, CBRNE attacks against the United States homeland." We did not caveat this; we did

not put it in a questionable format. We said "they will" and we believe that to be true. "Terrorists and/or rogue states will attempt multiple, simultaneous mass-casualty, CBRNE attacks against the United States homeland."

What is at issue is the timing of such attempts, not that they will occur. The terrorists will try to shape and degrade American political will in order to diminish American resistance to terrorist ideologies and agendas. The Department of Homeland Security and other federal, state, local, and tribal authorities will continue to improve their prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities, and in language that was published two months before Hurricane Katrina we concluded that in the event of major catastrophes, the President will direct DOD to provide substantial support to civil authorities. We recognized when we drafted that strategy that in both Homeland Defense and, most especially, civil support there would be a focused reliance upon reserve component capabilities.

### Katrina and Emergency Response

Let me tell you how that worked out. When Katrina occurred on August 29, 2005, the President has indicated, quite accurately, that our nation's response to Katrina was inadequate. We in the Department of Defense conducted a careful "after-action" review of our own performance, and while we believe the Department of Defense did pretty well in responding to Katrina, we too have learned lessons to ensure that our performance is better next time than it was last time.

We in DOD routinely incorporate that kind of self-criticism into any after-action assessment of how well we have done on a previous mission. It is not a confession of incompetence, it is a recognition that any organization, particularly a professional organization, needs to be unflinching in recognizing any deficiencies that have occurred so that they can be corrected. In fact, the DOD response to Hurricane Katrina was the largest, fastest civil support mission in the history of the United States—72,000 men and women in uniform deployed between August 29 and September 10. That may well be the largest deployment within that kind of time frame in history. It certainly was

the largest and fastest civil support mission in the history of our department.

But there were areas where we, in retrospect, recognize we need to do better. These were the areas that jumped out to confront us with our own requirement for better performance. I mention that we deployed 72,000 forces: 50,000 of those forces were National Guard, and 22,000 were active duty Title X military personnel under Admiral Keating's command and control. While elements of our response performed superbly, those two elements, the National Guard and the Title X Active Duty element, were not well integrated. The National Guard movement of force was not well known to, or understood by, U.S. Northern Command. Similarly, U.S. Northern Command's deployment of active duty forces really was not integrated into the Con-Ops (concept of operation) developed for the deployment of those 50,000 National Guardsmen. We had two stove-piped approaches, led by superb professionals, well executed operationally and tactically, but they were in parallel.

I come out of an infantry background where I know a little bit about deploying machine guns. You never put out a machine gun as a single weapon; you always deploy machine guns in pairs—two guns—so that they can be mutually reinforcing, so that they can have intercepting fields of fire, so that one gun improves the performance of the other. We did not do that in terms of our National Guard and Title X forces in response to Katrina. These “guns” were not mutually reinforcing; they ran along parallel, not intersecting paths. We learned from that experience that we have got to do a better job in the planning process of pulling together into a total force concept the superb capabilities found both within the National Guard and within the active duty Title X military.

Thousands of Americans along the Gulf Coast were saved by search and rescue (SAR) operations. Many search and rescue operations executed by the Coast Guard and Department of Defense include the National Guard. While the search and rescue missions saved countless lives, we did not coordinate the various elements of those SAR missions in our planning process in a way that would ensure the efficient use of all the platforms that we had available. It

is, I think, accurate to say that on some occasions we had two and three helicopters showing up to execute the same mission because those helicopters may have belonged to the National Guard, or to U.S. Northern Command, or to the Coast Guard, or to the Fish and Wildlife Service: It was not a coordinated, integrated concept of search and rescue. We need to do better.

We did not rapidly or accurately assess the damage after Katrina. The bottom line on that is that we need to take what are overseas, intelligence, and surveillance assets—aircraft like P-3s and C-130s and unmanned aerial vehicles such as the Predator—and we need to have those kinds of assets available for wide-area damage assessment following a catastrophic event because early news coverage of the damage associated with Katrina was not accurate. It took 24 hours to 48 hours to get a very clear picture of how devastating the damage was, particularly along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

In anticipation of Hurricane Rita, Admiral Keating acted decisively and put together that kind of package of aerial observation assets so that during Hurricane Rita, which occurred a few weeks after Katrina, we did have those aviation platforms available to get “eyes on the ground” in order to access the full scope of the damage.

### **Communications Inter-Operability**

We need much better communications inter-operability. First responders must be able to communicate seamlessly with the National Guard, and both must be able to communicate without impediment in coordination with our active duty military forces.

Our hardware is not compatible and, in a more challenging way, our communications planning has not been done in a coordinated way. We have corrected that. This year, if there is a major hurricane along the Gulf Coast, we will have, through careful planning and the right kind of technology, full inter-operability of communications.

Last, we need to be prepared to use military forces consistent with the law when, in the aftermath of a catastrophic event, we experience significant outbreaks of civil disorder. We are reliant upon civilian law enforcement to provide for the public safety of our citizenry, but following a cat-

astrophic event—perhaps an event much larger than Katrina—the civil disorder must be anticipated. We have to preserve constitutional rights, and we have to be prepared to enforce federal statutory law by the proper employment, consistent with the law, of military forces when directed by the President of the United States.

## Interagency Reform

Katrina was not an event. It was a sober warning. If you look at the 15 national planning scenarios that have been developed by the Department of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council, you will quickly discover that while Hurricane Katrina was indeed a catastrophic event, it was at the low end of catastrophic events in terms of the tragic loss of life and destruction of property.

The 15 national planning scenarios that have now been envisioned by the Department of Homeland Security could potentially involve a loss of life or a level of property destruction far greater than Hurricane Katrina. In that sense, Katrina was a very challenging wake-up call to notify us that we were ill-prepared at that point to respond to even more challenging catastrophic events.

The primary point that I want to make today is an expression of my belief that the time has come to move decisively toward a Goldwater–Nichols-type of reform within the interagency. By that I do not mean necessarily the passage of a statute, which is what happened in 1986. Under the direction of that statute, the follow-on integration of DOD capabilities into a joint war-fighting concept, whether it is required by law or by some other appropriate authority, means we have got to come together in our interagency planning because catastrophic events require a national response. No one department, including mine, has the capacity unilaterally to respond effectively to a catastrophic event.

In our planning process we must come together in order to anticipate the operational and tactical requirements able to be met by all federal agencies, in partnership with state and local competencies, public and private sector, civilian and military, so that we fuse that national competency into a well-prepared plan oriented toward each one of those 15 national planning scenarios.

The national planning scenarios give us a framework for the development of true interagency jointness. In my judgment, we should develop a departmental plan for each one of those 15 national planning scenarios. Then the Department of Homeland Security, in the exercise of its authority under the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, should integrate those departmental plans into a national response, fully coordinated with all levels of government and the private sector so that when one of those 15 national planning scenarios becomes a real-world event, we are prepared with a plan that gives us the 80 percent solution for the anticipated requirements.

You cannot pull together a national response to a catastrophic event on the fly. You need to have a detailed plan able to be modified in a crisis environment so that before a nuclear device is detonated you have a clear picture of the enormous resources required to begin the remediation. And that is true not only of the first National Planning Scenario, which is a 10-KT (kiloton) nuclear detonation, but for all 15, eleven of which involve CBRNE events within the United States. That is the argument that I make. I hope that ultimately that argument gains some traction. The argument that I have just made in a little greater detail is similar to what has been said by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In 1986, we realized that our military services could not go to war alone. We recognized in the context of Goldwater–Nichols that the capabilities of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marines, and the Coast Guard needed to be integrated into a single, joint warfighting concept.

Now, when we recognize that the United States homeland is part of that global battle space, and when we recognize that military forces within the United States in preventing or responding to a terrorist attack will be co-located with our civilian partners, we need to pull together a plan for an appropriate series of events. I believe the 15 national planning scenarios will allow us to anticipate before the crisis, not experience during the crisis, the requirements that we need to summon to begin an immediate response.

Our founders, most especially Alexander Hamilton in *Federalist VIII*, recognized that the character of our government will inevitably reflect the character of our nation. To preserve the core principle of civilian supremacy, we must ensure the people's faith and confidence in civilian competency. Excessive reliance upon military capabilities for domestic safety would quickly endanger both the warfighting strength of the military and, more fundamentally, the civilian constitutional character of our government. Therefore, in providing an effective response to a catastrophic event, the ultimate chal-

lenge is to operationally integrate military skills and capabilities into a national response while recognizing that domestic security and public safety must ultimately rest in the hands of our civilian—not our military—leaders. In a 21st century world, populated by transnational terrorists, that stark challenge now lies ahead of us.

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