**Title**: The Solution to the Interagency Problem

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**Subject Terms**: Interagency Reform

**Security Classification**: Unclassified

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**Report Date**: 30-04-2012

**Report Type**: Master of Operational Studies Research Paper

**Dates Covered**: July 2011-February 2012

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**Performing Organization**

United States Marine Corps

School of Advanced Warfighting

Marine Corps University

3070 Moreell Avenue

Quantico, VA 22134-5068

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**Sponsoring/monitoring Agency**

N/A

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**DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

Unlimited

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**Security Classification of**: Unclassified

**Limitation of Abstract**: UU

**Number of Pages**: 24

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**Telephone Number**

(703) 432-5318 (Admin Office)
FUTURE WAR PAPER

The Solution to the Interagency Problem

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

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AY 2011-12

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Approved:
Date: 29 MAY 2012
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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT
Executive Summary

Title: The Solution to the Interagency Problem

Author: Major S.M. Roche, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: A Presidential Executive Order adopting portions of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 with an emphasis on the civilian side of the Interagency and leveraging other Interagency initiatives would facilitate an Interagency “operational” level of coordination and execution, thus promoting more effective Interagency operations.

Discussion: The present unstable global economic situation in conjunction with an ever-increasing contest for resources and power ensures that future warfare will resemble the previous ten years in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, the painfully learned lessons from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) regarding the absolute necessity for close cooperation between all members of the Interagency must permeate doctrine for the foreseeable future. Previously in American history, after fighting a war of limited objectives, such as the Vietnam War (1959-1975), the armed forces have refocused on the higher end of the range of military operations, quickly jettisoning (forgetting) counterinsurgency lessons learned. However, as Fiasco by Thomas Ricks and Cobra II by Michael Gordon & General Bernard Trainer have shown, this comes with significant risk.

The above stated a very real difference between previous and current post-conflict operations might be upon us; moreover, the President and Congress finally seem serious about fixing the current imbalance between the military and civilian sectors of the Interagency. Congressional leaders recently reinforced the President’s intentions to “update, balance, and integrate the tools of American power” as prescribed within the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) by requiring an implementation plan for accomplishing just that, as set forth within section 1072 of the FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Together, these actions could rectify inefficient and ineffective Interagency coordination and execution.

Conclusion: While many call for fundamental Interagency change in the form of a Goldwater-Nichols II type of legislation, the difficulties in passing such a revolutionary bill compel an evolutionary approach. Furthermore, increased congressional oversight upon the elevated Presidential assignment to resolving inefficient Interagency actions could cascade into rectifying long-standing problem within the Interagency paradigm. Through a combination of incremental adoption of portions of the Goldwater-Nichols Act as well as passage of pending legislation would provide the Interagency, for the first time, with the ability to reconcile policy decisions with the necessary actions to achieve them.
Introduction

The present unstable global economic situation in conjunction with an ever-increasing contest for resources and power ensures that future warfare will resemble the previous ten years in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, the painfully learned lessons from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) regarding the absolute necessity for close cooperation between all members of the Interagency must permeate doctrine for the foreseeable future. Previously in American history, after fighting a war of limited objectives, such as the Vietnam War (1959-1975), the armed forces have refocused on the higher end of the range of military operations, quickly jettisoning (forgetting) counterinsurgency lessons learned. However, as Fiasco by Thomas Ricks and Cobra II by Michael Gordon & General Bernard Trainer have shown, this comes with significant risk.

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Over 300 professionals contributed to a 2008 Project National Security Reform (PNSR) study calling for “revolutionary” change to our current system of government. While the current imbalance within the Interagency requires substantial reform, the country’s domestic and economic focus ensures the failure of such drastic measures. On the other hand, a Presidential
Executive Order adopting portions of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 with an emphasis on the civilian side of the Interagency and leveraging other Interagency initiatives would facilitate an Interagency "operational" level of coordination and execution, thus promoting more effective Interagency operations.

**An Argument Against “Goldwater-Nichols II” for the Interagency**

The lack of cohesion within Interagency operations is a consequence of the checks and balances authored by the Founding Fathers and inscribed within the Constitution. Autocratic rule by England shaped the Founders’ placement and schema, causing them to institute rules preventing any single governmental component from gaining enough control to upset the balance of powers within the United States government. That paradigm functioned well, until upended by the country’s inability to pull itself from The Great Depression (1929- as late as the early 1940’s) and the United States military’s actions before and during World War II. Historically, three factors must exist to allow the passage of legislation that alters the Founders’ version of checks and balances.

"Grand Legislation," the moniker associated with such regulation, requires first, a number of highly visible national embarrassments with similar causality; and second, an intense public demand for change sparked by those embarrassments. Finally, there must be a congressional champion respected on both sides of the political aisle willing to undertake the difficulties associated with the passage of such a bill. The Goldwater-Nichols Act perfectly illustrates this process.

Multiple and very public military debacles such as Operation Eagle Claw (April 1980), Operation Urgent Fury (1983), and the death of 231 Marines on October 23, 1983, in Beirut,
Lebanon provoked a public outcry. As former Assistant Secretary of Defense, for Special Operations/ Low-Intensity Conflict James Locher, points out in his book *Victory on the Potomac: The Five Year War to Unify the Pentagon* those embarrassments along with a strong public demand for change provoked Senator Barry Goldwater to pursue a multi-year legislative effort that ultimately produced the Goldwater-Nichols Act.\(^{11}\)

While the GNA dramatically increased the interoperability of the Armed Services,\(^{12}\) it also highlighted the flaws of the Interagency and the need for similar legislation. Moreover, the combination of substantial growth of the Department of Defense (DOD) and the need to cooperate with civilian organizations often lacking the capacity and/or will to tackle complex pre- (Phase 0) and post-hostility (Phase IV) operations resulted in the military’s encroachment into areas previously reserved for civilian departments and agencies. Thus, the Interagency became, in effect, a DOD dominated activity. In that regards, the military emphasis on “unity of command” in an area that previously required close civil-military cooperation strained the relationship. Although, it is common knowledge that the military led much of the World War II post-hostility operations, over time people forgot that the education of Army Civil Affairs officers transpired in strict coordination with colleges such as the University of Virginia and Harvard.\(^{13}\) This forgotten, the actions following 9/11 caused understandable difficulties as civilian organizations sought their rightful place within the Interagency paradigm.

The last ten years has witnessed America’s increasing involvement in complex operations requiring close coordination among the various agencies comprising the Interagency. Yet, at home, in the case of Hurricane Katrina, and abroad, with Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF), efforts were disjointed, unsynchronized, and horribly managed. Independently planned agency initiatives often contributed to abysmal coordination resulting in
multiple overlapping, duplicative efforts. As a result, civilian partners have played only a minor role in contingency campaign design and execution evoking a strong demand for a dramatic change to Interagency operations.\textsuperscript{14}

*Forging a New Shield*, a 2008 PNSR study, represents the culmination of more than two years of work by more than three hundred U.S. national security executives, professionals, and scholars. The report proposes the most far-reaching governmental re-design since the passage of the National Security Act of 1947.\textsuperscript{15} Undoubtedly, a “Goldwater-Nichols II”, the moniker usually associated with such legislation, would resolve many of the current Interagency inefficiencies. However, critical aspects of the original Goldwater-Nichols Act are absent from the current Interagency situation.

Analyzing the three factors necessary for the passage of “grand legislation” strengthens the argument for an evolutionary vice revolutionary solution to this challenge. While, as previously mentioned, multiple public debacles have occurred, yet the country’s preoccupation with its domestic and economic difficulties have stymied a public demand for change. Furthermore, political divisiveness diminishes the likelihood of a bipartisan champion, like Senator Goldwater, willing to advocate such legislation through the political labyrinth and upset the balance of powers within the nation.

Understandably, the Phase 0/Phase IV paradigm has suffered due to the lack of close coordination between the different organizations, both military and civilian, that comprise the Interagency. Although a growing number of proponents call for “grand legislation” to reinvent the Interagency, the conditions necessary for such change remain absent. An evolutionary solution that reinvigorates the previous paradigm leading to the close coordination occurring
within civil-military operations as witnessed post-World War II would alleviate much of the inefficiencies.

The Solution

President Obama afforded three pages of the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) to the importance of updating, balancing, and integrating all of the tools of American power within a whole-of-government (WOG) approach.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, Congress demonstrated its seriousness in identifying a solution within the NDAA by requiring that, “not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees an implementation plan for achieving the WOG integration vision.”\textsuperscript{17} This contrasts markedly with the public’s disinterest. However, the emergence of an Interagency “operational” level through a combination of adopting select components of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, passing current legislation, and enforcing it upon current Interagency initiatives, would achieve the mandate Congress originally placed upon the President.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act, Title IV, Joint Officer Policies, directs a balanced officer career through education in conjunction with service and joint assignments.\textsuperscript{18} Furthermore, it requires an officer to attain joint accreditation before his or her promotion to general officer. Understandably, service members were initially skeptical of this provision.\textsuperscript{19} Retired Army Major General Raymond Barrett, the current Deputy Director at the Colonel Arthur D. Simons Center for Study of Interagency Cooperation, noted: “The issue of most concern to me and my peers was the joint duty requirement. I completely bought the institutional argument that there was no time in a normal career path for a rotational assignment away from the Army. Any assignment away from troops was considered wasting time and one with a joint headquarters was even worse.”\textsuperscript{20}
The answer to the question, “when did his GNA perceptions change?” speaks to a maturity level gained with time and experience. According to General Barrett, “My perceptions did change after the Act was made into law, but only over time and as I became more senior. I began to realize that the normal attitude of the other Services to optimize their role, capabilities, and even budgets was harmful to national security. It took me about ten years to come to this view.” Undoubtedly, the adoption of a similar “paradigm shift” on the civilian side of the Interagency would have the same influence, but it would only be the first step in achieving Interagency balance and integration.

While education would lay the foundation for achieving the President’s vision, the passage of current legislation serves as the necessary next step to solving the problem. Fortuitously, Congressional bipartisan agreement exists within the 112th Congress to accomplish this. The Senate and House simultaneously introduced S1268 and HR2314, collectively known as The Interagency Personnel Rotation Act of 2011 (IAPRA). Both bills drew on HR 6249, Interagency National Security Professional Education, Administration, and Development System Act of 2010, introduced in the 111th Congress, but not enacted. However, Section 1072 of the NDAA demonstrates the increased political scrutiny upon Interagency efforts, improving the likelihood of its passage.

No doubt, special interest groups and senior members of some departments and agencies will fight its passage; nevertheless, the “before” and “after” perceptions of the Goldwater-Nichols Act by two very senior and successful officers demonstrate the positive nature of such change. Retired USMC Lieutenant General Paul K. Van Riper recalls the pervasive influence of senior officers regarding the Goldwater-Nichols Act. As he notes, “Because so many senior Marine officers spoke out against it in various meetings and conferences I attended, I was against
However, a more pragmatic consideration of the legislation followed with his assignment as Director of the USMC Command and Staff College, allowing him to see the legislation’s wisdom.

The current Chief of Staff at U.S. Southern Command, Major General Juan Ayala USMC, also attests to the difficulties associated with changing institutional perceptions. As a young Captain, he was skeptical of the Goldwater-Nichols Act achieving its objectives. That said, he attributes much of his personal development to “three significant assignments that were either joint or involved working with other services.” The long-term experience of these senior officers contradicted the accepted wisdom of the day and convinced them of the importance and inevitability of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. In the final analysis, as Goldwater-Nichols demonstrates, legislative and executive necessity will ultimately triumph over internal agency shortsightedness.

To guarantee such a “paradigm shift” requires more than simply the passage and enforcement of the IAPRA; rotational tours must occur at the “operational” level, which, referring to Figure 1 currently does not exist within the Interagency. The Department of Defense identifies the operational level as, “Where campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas.” In other words, the operational level receives policy or strategic guidance and/or decisions and translates them into actions on the ground.

In military parlance, the reconciliation of strategic guidance to tactical actions is “operational art.” According to current Joint doctrine, this occurs within a Combatant Command (COCOM) headquarters through “a cognitive approach by commanders and staffs--
supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment--to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means."

Figure 1 above illustrates the lack of a corresponding command or headquarters level within the Interagency comparable to the military’s COCOM. With this in mind, the inherent difficulty in the Interagency’s ability to translate policy into action becomes easier to understand. An Executive Order elevating the new Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), formerly known as the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), to the National Security Council (NSC) could resolve this deficiency.

In 2004, National Security Presidential Directive 44 created the precursor to the CSO and mandated it to “coordinate and lead integrated U.S. Government efforts, involving all U.S.
departments and agencies with relevant capabilities, to prepare, plan for, and consult stabilization and reconstruction activities” under the auspices of the Department of State. Secretary of State Colin Powell’s displeasure with its creation foreshadowed the inability to accomplish such an immense task. That said, States’ first ever 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) suggested more than a name change. In reality, to truly update, balance, and integrate all of the United States WOG tools necessitates more drastic measures.

While the elevation of the CSO to the NSC level appears radical, in reality this would only serve to allow the CSO to accomplish its intended mission of mitigating Interagency tension. Moreover, the elevation of the CSO to the NSC would serve the implementation of policy decisions; therefore, CSO would not function as a member of the Presidential decision making process, only the implementation of those decisions. Hierarchically, CSO would fulfill the Interagency’s requirement for a contemporary to the military’s COCOM (See Figure 2).
An understanding of how the United States develops, coordinates, and implements its domestic and foreign policy reveals why this could be regarded as an extreme, but necessary solution. Central to this process stands the NSC, chaired by the President. Additional statutory members include the Vice President and the Secretaries of State, Energy, and Defense. The Director of National Intelligence and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also provide statutory advice to the President. Established by the National Security Act of 1947 under President Truman, the NSC affords the President the ability to make fully informed decisions relating to the employment and coordination of government actions commonly referred to as the Interagency. In other words, the NSC is responsible for ensuring Interagency synchronization,
coordination, and execution. In that regard, the NSC develops, distributes, and monitors implementation of the Presidential National Security Strategy.  

While an Executive Order affords the President almost unilateral decision-making authority, the President normally relies on the National Security Staff (NSS), led by the National Security Advisor (NSA), to reach a decision amenable to each of the affected departments and agencies. Referring to Figure 3, the NSA seeks agreement at three distinct governmental levels. If accord is not attained at the lowest level or the Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) then the Deputy Committee (DC) seeks resolution. If this is unattainable, the matter advances to the Principals Committee (PC). Ultimately, the President serves as the final arbitrator. Nevertheless, the reason why entities such as PSNR call for a "revolutionary change" to this system lay in the inherent difficulties in reaching consensus.

This decision-making process also places many of its members in a paradoxical situation. Each member of the Interagency apparatus must carefully balance his or her organizational interests with his or her duty to advise the President. Christopher Lamb, a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, identified the compounding nature of this paradox
with the challenges that departments and agencies have in reaching internal policy agreements, much less coordinating efforts across the U.S. Government.\textsuperscript{35} In theory, the discourse occurring throughout this process produces thoroughly vetted and agreeable decisions. However, in reality, this cumbersome process directly attributes to the Interagency's inability to produce coherent policy.

The proposed solution to elevate the CSO and assign it the responsibility to function as an Interagency operational level entity requires further development and explanation. The CSO would serve as a vital link during steady state operations, between the in-country ambassador and the COCOM. To accomplish the CSO’s mission it would be necessary for the COCOMs to transfer ownership of the Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG) to the CSO. The JIACGs would, however, continue to serve their respective COCOM headquarters to facilitate coordination and synchronization between the various civilian agencies and the military.

The CSO’s ability to operate as an Interagency operational planning activity would also enhance civil-military crisis response. Upon assembling the NSC in response to a crisis, the CSO would begin operational planning, anticipating either serving in a supporting or supported role in relation to the affected COCOM. In this way, the CSO would end the current habit of assigning responsibility, no matter what type of crisis is faced, to the DOD. Actions occurring within Phase IV planning and execution during OIF demonstrates that this does not always reconcile strategic decisions into tactical actions.

An example of how this relationship could immediately benefit the entire Interagency could be updating and validating each of the COCOM’s contingency plan Annex Victors. The Annex V describes how the military envisions the Interagency supporting the respective
contingency plan. Yet, a civilian operational level does not exist the Annex’s are rarely vetted by the civilian organizations to ensure feasibility and supportability. In effect, problems that could be mitigated during planning do not arise until execution.

Conclusion

While many call for fundamental Interagency change in the form of a Goldwater-Nichols II type of legislation, the difficulties in passing such a revolutionary bill compel an evolutionary approach. Furthermore, increased congressional oversight upon the elevated Presidential assignment to resolving inefficient Interagency actions could cascade into rectifying long-standing problem within the Interagency paradigm. Through a combination of incremental adoption of portions of the Goldwater-Nichols Act as well as passage of pending legislation would provide the Interagency, for the first time, with the ability to reconcile policy decisions with the necessary actions to achieve them.
Endnotes

1 Interagency- (DOD) Of or pertaining to United States Government agencies and departments, including the Department of Defense. THE DOD and every other civilian governmental agency. (Source: Joint Publication 3-0)


8 Operational level- (DOD) The level where campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas. (Source: JP 3-0)

9 Richard Zaszewski, Rebecca deGuzman, and Major Mason Dula, Problem Solving Discussion, December 11, 2011.

10 David Trachtenberg, Interview by Major Sean M. Roche, October 27, 2011.

11 James Locher, *Victory on the Potomac* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 223.


15 PNSR, 22.

16 National Security Strategy, 14-16.


19 Major General Raymond D. Barrett, Jr. USA (Ret), email to author, December 30, 2011.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.


23 Lieutenant General Paul K. Van Riper USMC (Ret), email to author, January 6, 2012.


26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.


30 Ibid, 12.


32 Chaired by a Senior Director and consisting primarily of Interagency Assistant Secretaries.

33 Chaired by either the Deputy National Security Advisor or the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and consisting of Interagency Deputy Secretaries.

34 Chaired by the National security Advisor and consisting of Interagency Secretaries.

35 Christopher Lamb, *Civilian Surge (Chapter 3)* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2009), 36.
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