Executive Summary

A NATIONAL SECURITY STAFF
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Jack A. LeCuyer

America stands at a crossroads. Within the past 2 decades, national security and foreign policy organizations and experts have perceived serious deficiencies in the authorities, organizations, and personnel used to prepare for and conduct national security missions allowing the United States to exercise its power to fullest advantage in achieving the goals of our national security strategy. If the nation is to maintain its world leadership and influence, it must transform its obsolete national security system to enable better handling of the challenges and opportunities of the changed global ecosystem. This transformation must go beyond simple reform and doing the same things differently. It must involve doing new things that enable us to truly establish collaborative, networked, performance-based management of the national security system at the strategic level, management that cascades down to the departments, agencies, and elements in the field.

Three problems with the current interagency cooperation system are most commonly cited. These are: (1) a government-wide lack of strategic planning and interagency operational planning capabilities among civilian agencies; (2) a variety of structural deficiencies in the U.S. Government that tend toward “stove-piping” responses, with each agency operating independently and to civilian agencies being reluctant to divert scarce resources, including personnel, from their core missions to interagency missions; and (3) personnel who are not trained for interagency missions and are often unfamiliar with the missions, capabilities, and cultures of other agencies.1

Transformation of our national security system must start at the top, with the National Security Council (NSC) and the National Security Staff (NSS). Former National Security Advisor General James Jones recognized this fact early in his tenure. In a memorandum dated March 18, 2009, he asserted: “The United States must integrate its ability to employ all elements of national power in a cohesive manner. In order to deal with the world as it is, rather than how we wish it were, the National Security Council must be transformed to meet the realities of the new century.”2 Jones’s call for transformation was echoed in the National Security Strategy issued in May 20103 and again in the President’s State of the Union Message in January 2011.4

On May 27, 2009, pursuant to Presidential Study Directive 1 (PSD-1), Organizing for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, the Obama administration announced a major structural realignment that combined the National Security Council (NSC) and the Homeland Security Council (HSC) staffs into an integrated ‘National Security Staff’ (Staff). Additional elements of reform and principles were included, but this selective approach created a structure lacking full design of the necessary functions or division of staff labor to accomplish those functions. Unfortunately, while the White House took initial steps in this direction, it has done little since PSD-1 to recognize this imperative for transformation of the national security system. As a result, both
the House and the Senate included a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act for 2012 (Section 1072) that requires the President to report annually on the changes in necessary functions or divisions of staff effort required to implement the National Security Strategy of May 2010.

At the top of the U.S. national security system, the NSC and the NSS serve as the de facto hub of the national security system. Each President since President Harry Truman has structured and adapted the NSC and its staff to suit his leadership style, adjust to the expanding requirements of the presidency, and respond to significant shocks to the national security or political systems such as September 11, 2001, and Hurricane Katrina. Although the national security environment has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War in 1991, the United States has not changed the fundamental way it manages our national security system or the role of the NSC staff/NSS as strategic managers of the national security system to meet the challenges and opportunities of the new global security environment. As a result of this lack of change in the structure and functions of the NSS, the National Security Staff remains focused almost exclusively on policy development, staffing the President, and crisis management rather than the long-term strategic view. A deliberate NSS design based on strategic system management functions, processes, and best practices will improve the balance between departmental and the necessary whole-of-government practices required for the global security environment of the 21st century, and ensure that the NSS is the strategic system manager for improving the performance, adaptability, and efficiency of the overall national security system in achieving those national security goals and missions that contribute to our long-term prosperity and security.

This monograph describes a fully integrated NSS and an interagency management system based on the dual concepts of end-to-end process management at the strategic level—that space between the President and the departments and agencies—and decentralized execution and implementation that is underwritten by a whole-of-government/whole-of-nation approach. Strategic end-to-end process manage-
pate and meet our national security needs for the 21st century.

ENDNOTES


