



Executive Summary



Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College

A NATIONAL SECURITY STAFF FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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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-

ment and decentralized departmental and agency execution encompass policy, strategy formulation and long-term planning, planning and resource guidance to the departments and agencies, alignment of department and agency resources with national security missions, oversight of policy implementation, and assessment and accountability with feedback loops, as well as development and support of the national security system. “Whole-of-government” is defined as an approach that fosters government-wide collaboration on purpose, actions, and results in a coherent, combined application of available resources to achieve the desired national security objectives or end state.

Section 1072 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012 requires the President to submit a report 9 months after it was signed into law (December 31, 2011) on the organizational and process changes required to implement the *National Security Strategy* issued in May 2010. *This monograph offers an architect’s concept for implementing change in the executive branch and creating the foundations for a strategic partnership with Congress for transforming our national security system to meet the rigors of the 21st century.*

Part 1 of this monograph describes the challenges of strategic management of our national security system in the new global security environment of the 21st century. Part 2 describes the legacy 1947-89 system that is inadequate for our national security challenges today. Part 3 describes the attributes of a transformed national security system. Part 4 identifies the roles of the NSS, broad principles, and core system management functions for the Staff’s end-to-end management of the national security system. Part 5 sets forth a series of best practices, processes, and the core functions the Staff must perform for successful strategic management of the national security system. Part 6 identifies the key tasks in the development of the national security system. Part 7 examines the issue of resourcing the NSS (and, by extension, OMB) to perform these transformative strategic management functions. Part 8 provides a suggested outline for the President’s Section 1072 Report to Congress—a report that can establish a strategic partnership between the executive branch and Congress in order to antici-

pate and meet our national security needs for the 21st century.

ENDNOTES

1. Nina Serafino, Catherine Dale, and Pat Towell, *Building Civilian Interagency Capacity for Missions Abroad: Key Proposals and Issues for Congress*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 22, 2011, p. 1.

2. Memorandum from the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (General James L. Jones), "The 21st Century Interagency Process," March 18, 2009, available from foreignpolicy.com/files/nsc_memo_21.pdf, hereinafter cited as "Jones Memo." General Jones was a member of the Guiding Coalition for the Project on National Security Reform prior to becoming the National Security Advisor in December, 2009.

3. President Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, pp. 14-16.

4. President Barack Obama, *State of the Union Speech*, January 25, 2011, available from www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address.

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