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Transformation and Security Cooperation

Remarks By Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith, ComDef 2004 Conference National Press Club, Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 8, 2004.

When I arrived at the Pentagon for my current stint, I heard the word transformation over and over again, and my allergy to buzzwords kicked in. “Transformation” was used to cover a vast amount of territory. It was invoked so variously that I found it hard to induce a definition. Anything that anybody wanted to promote was labeled “transformational.” For many folks, the word seemed to mean no more than “good.”

But there’s more to transformation than a buzzword. The Pentagon is a vast bureaucracy and it tends toward many of the traits, including the pathologies, of monstrous governmental departments. If one wants such an institution to be forward-looking rather than routine, innovative rather than hide-bound, responsive to presidential leadership rather than merely inertial, willing to take risks, skillful in countering the novel ideas of our enemies – in other words, if one wants the Pentagon to function better than bureaucracies commonly do, then the institution’s leadership must push it to think and act extraordinarily. The effort to do that is what President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld call “transformation.” It’s an effort with many parts and I’d like to talk about some of those parts, especially those that are conceptual.

Transformation – Overcoming Pre-conceptions

Many commentators talk of transformation as if it were primarily about hardware – about applying high technology to our weaponry. But first and foremost, as I see it, transformation involves changing the way we think about national security and defense.

Among the key transformational insights is the necessity to deal with the world as it is – not as it *used to be* and not as *we wish it were*. Sound strategic thinking recognizes the limits of our intelligence, in all senses of the term. That means that, even if the U.S. government improves the collection, analysis and distribution of intelligence, U.S. officials won’t be able to predict all threats – we won’t be able to eliminate surprise from world affairs. And we won’t be able to eliminate judgment and risk from national security decision-making.

Better intelligence is much to be desired, but uncertainty is inherent in strategic affairs. This is a point

that Secretary Rumsfeld stressed in the Quadrennial Defense Review, which he produced in 2001, even before the 9/11 attack. It's given rise to major initiatives to help the Defense Department deal quickly, nimbly and effectively with surprise and with strategic uncertainty. These transformational initiatives include (1) deploying our forces abroad for greater flexibility; (2) creating lighter forces that could be transported long distances quickly; (3) exploiting technology so that light forces can strike with precision and be as lethal as only heavy forces were in the past and (4) promoting defense ties with allies and partners around the globe so that the United States can fulfill our commitments, build support for our policies and create coalitions for our future military operations. All of these initiatives have been designed to give us flexibility to deal with whatever problems arise in the future.

As you know, the Defense Department under Secretary Rumsfeld has moved away from "threat-based" planning to what we call "capabilities-based" planning. The idea is that, unlike in the Cold War, we no longer think we know precisely which threats we have to confront and plan against, who will pose them and where, much less when. What we do know is that there are forces likely over the coming years to attack or challenge the United States or our interests, including the interests of key allies and friends. We do know that, together with our impressive strengths, we have vulnerabilities and these inhere in the open and free nature of our society and our dependency on various technologies.

Though we don't count on predicting precise threats, we are reasonably confident that we can identify the kinds of capabilities that enemies may use against us. Our planning focuses on those capabilities. It's planning that does *not* assume crystal-ball powers on the part of intelligence or other analysts. It's planning that appreciates that no complex human activity ever goes according to plan. It's planning that is flexible and adaptable – that is, ready for modification as preconceived notions are contradicted by real-world events.

Indeed, if we boiled down the concept of transformation to its essence, it is, I think, overcoming preconceptions – renouncing overly rigid notions of how the world works. Good statesmen and strategists – transformational leaders – are not wedded to preconceptions. They have ideas and theories, they uphold principles, but they're clear-eyed and deal with the world as it actually is, not the way they theorize it is. They make adjustments when their theories fail to predict, when their notions are contradicted by the facts.

The epithet "ideologue" is a common insult, often attached by journalists to folks with whom they disagree. It's often misapplied, but, when apt, it has value as a label for an important phenomenon.

I define an ideologue as someone for whom the facts don't matter. Ideologues exist across the political spectrum. Some conservatives are ideologues, some liberals are ideologues. Ideologues exalt their own theories and beliefs above the facts – they filter their perceptions, as it were, so they don't have to register realities that conflict with their preconceived ideas. The scholarly or scientific mind – the practical mind – is the opposite of that of the ideologue.

As I see it, transformation is a way of thinking that respects the facts. It reflects a readiness to adapt, a rejection of fixed ideas. It's the opposite of ideology. Transformation is the willingness to take on new missions as required. Before 9/11, the U.S. military didn't do "manhunts." Now they do. Organizing,

training and equipping the full range of another country's security forces – including the police – was not considered a military mission. Now it is.

Transformation is a willingness to change our acquisition plans as necessity dictates – for example, making some products operational, to some extent, even before they've been fully developed and tested. That's what's been done with some unmanned aerial vehicles and with our missile defenses.

Transformation is an outlook, an attitude, a way of thinking. President Bush, Secretary Rumsfeld, General Dick Myers have exerted themselves to create a climate in the Pentagon conducive to transformation. In that climate, we've been cultivating a comprehensive set of changes in the way we:

- Train, equip and employ our forces;
- Position those forces around the globe;
- Conduct procurement and related activities; and,
- Work with our allies and partners around the world.

International Cooperation – Key U.S. Strategic Asset

I want to stress, in particular, that last item – the way we work with our allies and partners.

One of our country's key strategic assets is the network of alliances and defense partnerships that we maintain throughout the world. There are important missions of the United States that benefit greatly from international defense cooperation. Indeed, there are missions of paramount importance – such as the war on terrorism – that can be accomplished only with the help of friends and allies.

It would be impractical, indeed, foolish to fail to build upon the global network of U.S. strategic relationships. A U.S. policy of “unilateralism” would make no sense which, presumably, is why critics revel in ascribing the policy to us. But it's also why we've never even considered adopting such a policy.

As the Administration's record on this point is abundant and consistent, I would say that the unilateralism charge is an example of an ideological assertion.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, scores of allied and partner nations have contributed forces to work alongside ours in liberating and reconstructing those countries. And we now have an affirmative answer once and for all to that old chestnut: can NATO take on a mission “out of area.” The answer is “yes,” for NATO has now taken command of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, has assisted Poland in assuming command of a multinational division in southern Iraq and has recently in the Istanbul summit committed to a train-and-equip mission for the Iraqi security forces.

International counterterrorism cooperation has disrupted enemy networks, interfered with terrorists' financial flows, aborted some terrorist operations and helped capture or kill dozens of al Qaeda and other terrorist operatives and leaders around the world, including such major figures as Khalid Sheik

Mohammed.

For the better part of the century, the United States has viewed international cooperation as a strategic asset. Our alliances won World War II and the Cold War. Our global set of allies and partners now is facing a new set of problems, including the war on terrorism. That is a war that threatens not just the United States, but the openness and prosperity of all free societies.

Many of the strategic and technological circumstances that we now face have increased our vulnerability and our enemy's ability to harm us. Failed states and ungoverned areas allow terrorist networks places to hide, to train, to plan, to operate. Cheap long-distance travel, mass transit and porous borders enable the movements of their operatives.

And while new technology has helped us to build lighter more agile and more powerful military forces, it's also created dependencies in our society that make it easier for our enemies to create large-scale disruptions. Terrorist capacities are now greater than they were in the past decades. For example, WMD technology is more readily available. Terrorists exploit satellite and cellular communications and the proliferation of international medial outlets, and there's the potential offered by cyber warfare.

How can the Defense Department harness U.S. alliances and partnerships to deal with terrorism and other challenges?

DoD Security Cooperation – Common View of Problems and Solutions

The Department's answering this question through what we call "security cooperation." This is a means of developing with our allies and partners a common appreciation of problems and solutions.

When we talk about security cooperation, we're not just talking about the sharing of intelligence information or the conduct of combined military training –though those are elements of the effort – but actually engaging in "combined transformation" with our allies and partners. The goal is to share technology, information, activities and a frame of mind about security issues.

In the Security Cooperation Guidance, Secretary Rumsfeld has directed his combatant commanders and others in the Department to move beyond the relatively unfocused practice of "engagement" – which sometimes amounted to little more than "showing the flag" abroad – and toward a more specific and practical set of goals to lay the foundation for our partners working with us in defense endeavors in the future.

This has been a significant change in our defense strategy. The Department's interactions with foreign defense establishments are now aimed at achieving four basic objectives of security cooperation:

- Improving information exchange and intelligence sharing to help develop a common threat assessment;
- Building defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests;

- Developing allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and coalition operations; and,
- Providing our forces the military access they need for their work.

DoD's security cooperation is focused on combating terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, influencing constructively the strategic choices of key powers that are now at crossroads on the world stage, cooperating with partners regarding regional disputes and increasing international capacity to conduct peace operations. All of these purposes complement our strategy in the war on terrorism.

The Department is making a long-term effort to transform our alliances and help build new coalitions for the future. There are three tenets of security cooperation that help us to achieve this objective.

First and most importantly, we must develop common thinking with our allies and partners about strategic issues – for example, the war on terrorism, missile defense and increasing interoperability of our militaries. We do this not only by holding official talks, but through combined exercises, training and education, military to military contacts and international acquisition projects. Through such interactions, we're expanding our existing security relationship and developing new ones.

For example:

- We're making our alliances with NATO, Australia, Japan and South Korea more capable militarily with an emphasis on getting more usability out of our forces.
- We've forged new relationships with countries like Uzbekistan and Yemen.
- We've improved intelligence sharing with partners around the world.

The second tenet of security cooperation is capacity building. We're helping our partners to increase their capabilities and to transform their own defense establishments. We want them to have the capability and willingness to take on missions that serve our common interests. These efforts range from spurring allied transformation efforts with NATO through acquisition and combined command-and-control programs, to security assistance activities that help professionalize the militaries of key partners in the war on terrorism or in peace operations. Other examples include:

- Our train-and-equip efforts in the Caucasus and Central Asia;
- The president's Proliferation Security Initiative to increase our ability through cooperation with allies and partners to stop the transfer of weapons of mass destruction; and,
- The president's initiative to increase the capacity of multiple countries around the world to conduct peace operations.

Third, we're working to reduce various impediments to cooperation. This is a matter of creating conditions to facilitate security cooperation. The Department is engaged in this effort through the work it does on arrangements for access and over-flight rights, protections contained in Status of Forces

Agreements, technology, security arrangements and building infrastructure that permits combined exercises and combined operations.

The President's initiative to realign the U.S. global defense posture ties together transformational strategic thinking and these three tenets of security cooperation. The term "posture" comprises size, location, types and roles of forward military forces and capabilities; it refers to our ability to project power. Through active consultations with allies and partners, the United States has harmonized with them our thinking on the need to develop greater flexibility in our posture to contend with uncertainty.

Intelligence is never perfect, so we must hedge against misjudgments regarding emerging threats. We must, as it were, plan to be surprised. With the help of our allies and partners, U.S. forces will be positioned forward in regions to enable them to reach potential crisis spots quickly.

Through security cooperation, we're increasing our capability to fulfill commitments abroad by strengthening the roles of our allies and partners. A principal aim in our global posture realignment is to help our friends build the capacity to modernize their own strategies, doctrines and forces so that they can operate better with our own and be relevant to the future. We see the global posture realignment as pushing capabilities forward. It is the key to keeping our alliances capable, relevant and therefore sustainable for decades to come.

We plan to station a Stryker Brigade combat team in Germany as part of the posture realignment, a move that will increase our ability to operate with our NATO allies by providing them exposure to the latest doctrine and equipment on the battlefield. And as we proceed with posture changes, we're discussing cooperative transformation efforts, as well. The new NATO Response Force and Allied Command - Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia, headed up by Admiral Giambastiani, are examples of these combined allied transformation efforts.

Realigning the U.S. posture also will help strengthen our alliances by tailoring our footprint to suit local conditions. The goal is to reduce friction with our host nations, the kind that results from accidents and other problems relating to local sensitivities. Removal of the U.S. Air Expeditionary Wing from Prince Sultan Air Base, for example, helped improve our relations with the Saudis. And we are taking a thorn out of South Korea's flesh by moving a U.S. headquarters out of downtown Seoul and shifting U.S. forces southward on the Korean Peninsula beyond the range of North Korean artillery.

Closing

I hope this quick review has given you some useful insight into Administration thinking about transformation, alliances, security cooperation and our global posture realignment. The goal of everything that we are doing at the Defense Department is to protect the freedom and security of the American people and to fulfill our commitments to our allies and friends.

I'd like to end by offering a tribute to the forces from the United States and from our coalition partners who are fighting the war on terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world. We should all work to help them succeed. We thank them for protecting our freedom.

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