

Transcript
Military Analyst Call
Topic: QDR
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ON BACKGROUND
Transcriber: Murphy

Mr. Ruff: Hello? Folks, this is Eric Ruff and with me is, among others, are [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and they'll be talking to you for a second – in a second or two.

I just wanted to open up by talking a little bit about sort of what we are doing here. Obviously, as we are getting closer and closer to releasing the QDR, in about – what is it now, probably about 12 days or something like that – a week from this Monday, information is already starting to come out more and more.

You probably saw Mark Mazzetti's piece in the LA Times (Jan. 24), so we kind of made a decision to start talking about this a little bit. So we are talking on background now about the QDR. And I think the framework we are working in – and we have a document that's called a preface. It's a preface that's going to go in the front of the QDR when we send it up. And we can make this available to you guys. I don't know if we have the electrons on it yet – but we have a – it's about a three-page document, and Tara (Jones) or somebody will get it out to you either by fax or email, if we can email it OK? So, I think we've got all that information for everybody who's on the call.

Important to remember here is that this QDR is not a new beginning. In essence, we've been working lessons learned since we came in in 2001. And it's been a process by which over the last year or so a number of assumptions have been looked at and tested and tested and the thinking has been throughout this what have we learned from Iraq? What have learned from Afghanistan? And what do we know going into the future about what our force structure is going to be?

This thing has been a very high collaboration with civilian – I haven't been here more than two years, but the civilian and military collaboration in terms of this document, and [REDACTED] and the admiral can certainly speak to this – has been really something to watch over the last year-plus.

So with that in mind, I'll just – we'll turn it over to [REDACTED] and then [REDACTED] you and [REDACTED] can just take it from here.

[REDACTED] Yeah, hi, this is [REDACTED]. First of all I want to say hi to Ken and Tim from a former life. I am going to walk you through some high points on the QDR. My role was as I guess basically the traffic cop, the manager, and then I was supported by Marty who is the J-8 here, and also the folks in PA&E, and the three of us pretty much represented the management cell.

One thing unique about this QDR as Eric was alluding to is that it was not a staff product. It is the work of the four stars, and their Senate-confirmed civilian equivalents in the building. They drove it; they made all the decisions; they directed the work on it; and they're the guys that put thousands and thousands of hours into it.

It is a wartime QDR. That's one thing that's different from in the past. We think that we're in the fourth year of a very long war. It's a war with a different sort of enemy than we faced in the past, and different sort of needed capabilities that we have to develop.

The QDR itself is supposed to be a 20-year look into the future of what the department needs. We're supposed to develop a strategy and then resource that strategy. Another thing that we did different this time is before starting the QDR we did the strategy. That was published in March of

'05. It's available on DefenseLink. It's an unclass document. That strategy took about six months of the senior leadership's time. And when we refer to the senior leadership, we're talking the secretary and the deputy, the chairman and the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs, three Service secretaries, five – four service chiefs, and five undersecretaries. And that comprises the headquarter's senior leadership, and then on a periodic basis we bring in the nine combatant commanders to get their inputs. That group was supported by the vice chiefs of the Services and some of the other direct reports to the secretary who, at their four-star level, ended up doing an awful lot of the staff work to push it forward to the senior leadership.

What we came out with were two twin imperatives. And the bottom line of the QDR report itself says that we need to shift our balance and the capabilities we had, that the Sept. 11, 2001 represented a change and an off-balancing of what the strategic context that we thought we had up until that point. And so we are shifting our balance and we are shifting our capabilities. And I'll talk to some of the areas we are doing that in.

We see four sets of challenges that we have in the future to be able to address. And historically we've looked at a traditional set of challenges which basically involved major combat ops, and state-versus-state conflicts. And we looked at everything else as a lesser-included case to be able to meet that.

As we look to the future we see a set of irregular challenges which are represented by both Iraq and Afghanistan, but also the operations that we saw in Haiti and Liberia, and this is where usually the enemy is within a state, but not part of a state. We are not fighting another nation-state, but some sort of movement, and it requires a different set of capabilities, sometimes thought as lower level but still an area where we need to develop more expertise.

The second set is a catastrophic set of challenges. And those are one time of events that could occur to the U.S. They are just unacceptable for us to accept that blow. Pearl Harbor would be an example of that; 9-11 is an example of that; getting hit by a nuclear IED in one of our cities would be an example of that. And so defense has a role in protecting the nation against that in the future.

And then the final set of the four is disruptive. And that is a challenge or a threat which might come against us that would basically neutralize the American military as a key instrument of national power.

And you kind of think of if another country would have gotten stealth rather than us, what would have that meant? If somebody comes up with a bio-warfare agent that can genetically target our soldiers or something, than those are the type of challenges that we want to be able to meet.

So we look at the future; we look at about getting capabilities across all four of those sets of challenges.

The second big part of the QDR was a recognition that as we change the capability of the forces in the field we have to change the headquarters. That the headquarters and the way that we're currently and operated is not sufficiently agile to be able to support the fighting forces that we have over there. So we have to do things to better support them and to be able to accelerate our ability to reorient the force. So there is an internal look here, too.

There's a recognition that this QDR, as Eric was saying, is a point in time across a continuum of transformation. So it represents a snapshot in time. It is something that started working on basically two years ago started the initial effort, and we'll still be working on it two years from now.

There is a point in time on the 6th of February where we send up a report to the Hill, but it is an evolving process.

Eric talked a little bit about the lessons learned and what went in here. It was more than just Iraq and Afghanistan. It is the – the other areas in the global war on terror – the Philippines, the Horn of Africa, Georgia and the Pan-Sahel (in Africa). These are areas where we are trying to fight the global war on terrorism. We are working with partner nations; sometimes they lack the capability, sometimes they lack the will to be able to effectively prosecute this, and we need to do things to build up their capabilities.

Another big area is humanitarian. Our biggest victories to date in the global war on terrorism which involves impacting the hearts and minds of the moderate Muslims have been in our responses to humanitarian disasters. Specifically, the earthquake around Christmas of '04 and then the tsunami from the earthquake, and then Pakistani earthquake (October '05). And the polling that the agency does and the shift of opinions because of those toward the United States and away from radical Islam has been very, very significant.

So that speaks to another problem that we face in the future and that's one of unpredictability and uncertainty. We cannot predict with any certainty whatsoever how our forces might be able to be used in the future. We can say with a very high probability that within the next 10 years U.S. forces will be employed somewhere in the world where they are not today. But as far as when that will be, where that will be, or how that will be, there is just no way to determine that. So we have to have an agility of forces and we have to build capabilities, rather than focusing on a specific threat.

And then the final area that has informed the work is our response in support of civil authorities, specifically, the military's response to 9-11, and now more recently Hurricane Katrina and Rita. And that in providing the American people security, we have a role to play on the domestic front, too.

So the QDR then will speak to – the document will speak to four key focus areas that we are concerned with building more capabilities at the beginning of the 21st century.

How do we provide defense in-depth to the homeland? How do we hasten the demise of terrorist networks? How do we preclude hostile powers or rogue elements from acquiring or using WMD? And then finally, how do we influence and impact countries that are at strategic crossroads?

And they're we are thinking of three countries specifically. We are thinking of Russia and to temper its move toward authoritarianism. We are thinking of China and successfully managing its rise in the community of nations as a constructive force, and if that didn't prove successful, how

So those are four problem areas that the QDR addressed, and in doing that, they tried to come up with for our external customer, who we personify in the president, how are we going to be able to provide him, and his successor more importantly, options to be able to deal with these key problem areas of the beginning of the 21st century?

And then for our internal customer, who we view as the joint warfighter, how do we get them the capabilities set that they'll be more effective in dealing with these? And so the QDR then goes through and takes 12 different areas where we are interested in developing and enhancing capabilities. And then it goes on to look at the headquarter's function – how do we do governance at the headquarter's level? How do we improve on some of our processes? What do we do as far as the human capital strategy? And then finally, and probably most importantly, what can we do in the area of building partnership capability and capacity?

Now that partnership and capability capacity happens domestically, as far as working with state and local governments, Department of Homeland Security; it happens interagency on the national security front, working with State Department, the NSC, CIA in an interagency process; and then internationally, how do we build the capability of the partner nations that we work with? Because this is very clear to the Department of Defense that we have to have lots of humility as we approach the problem set before us.

We are not going to be able to predict what is going to be able to happen, and we are not going to be able to solve it on our own, either as a department or a nation. We are going to be dependent on partners. Most times for sure they are going to be able to for sure address the problem cheaper than we can, and many times they are going to be able to do it more effectively because they are familiar with the local cultural terrain, they know the language, and they can operate more effectively in the environment we are in.

Along those 12 areas that we talked about being able to make changes, we talk about leading-edge investments that we can make and decisions that we can make in the fiscal year '07 budget, that arrives on the Hill the same time that the QDR does. But those are only leading-edge investments. The major shifts the department needs to make will be made as we do the program – future-year defense program in the coming year, which will look at the years '08 through '13. So that's where a lot of the significant vectors that the QDR has set will find their way into programmatic change, although there are some that are handled in the QDR itself.

And with that, at a top level – I guess one of the things – two other points real quick. One is we did do a force-planning construct. We have refined the force-planning construct from 2001. We maintain that we will still be able to do two major conflicts nearly simultaneously, take one of them to the level of what we call a win-decisive, sometimes categorized as something that might result in a regime change. We'll be able to do those. In the past, we had thought of both of those as conventional campaigns. Going forward, we want to have the capability to have one of them be a prolonged, irregular campaign.

The analysis that we did in the QDR clearly proved that the most stressing thing on the force is not the high-intensity major combat operations, but it is the prolonged, irregular campaign that goes on for a number of years and requires a rotational base to support it. And the multiplier effect there is what puts the stress on the force.

Some of the other things we learned is that we talk about the force some people think of an active-reserve component. We also need to think about an operational and an institutional component. And the usability and the force that we employ forward is only the operational component. And so as we look at what the size of the force is, rather than looking at total end strength, where there is many things on the institutional force we can do to transfer to civilian jobs or contractor jobs, we really - what the number we're really interested in is what do we have in the operational force, and what are the capabilities of those forces versus the problem set we are confronted with?

And so the QDR does a lot to move more capability and more numbers into the operational force. It also does a lot to move more capability into the irregular special operations arena, making some sizable increases there, and taking the general purpose forces and start to give them (soft-light?) capabilities.

Also in the force-planning construct, we recognize the need to have a deterrence, but not a one-size-fits-all deterrence, which we've had in the past of massive retaliation, but one that will also work against rogue powers who might be in a state of collapse or would seemingly appear to be undeterrable and also terrorists and their networks.

And so there was the addition of a broader deterrent capability. So the force-planning construct maintains the two-war strategy; maintains the forward presence; talks to a steady state versus

surge. In the area of surge there's going to be two – we will be able to handle two major conflicts, one of them which might be a prolonged irregular and take one of them to a win-decisive level.

It also recognizes that the force sizing, versus the force planning, is going to tend to be a function of policy choices being made. What are you going to have in the way of a mobilization as you face different conflicts? What are you going to do as a rotational base? What are you going to do for timelines (inaudible – at?) the operational criteria that you set for yourself? Are you going to stay engaged at the same level around the world? Are you going to do anything different institutionally to be able to move forces from the institutional to the operational? And then what will you do with emergency authorities you might have like we currently have on end strength?

The QDR went in with the assumption that the force size, while it was about right, but the force capability distribution needed a lot of rebalancing. After a year of work and analysis, we feel comfortable with that initial assumption and have kept it.

So with that, if [REDACTED] has anything to add I'll let him do that, and then we can start taking your questions.

[REDACTED] Good afternoon. I think probably the best use of your time that goes is to go to your questions, because quite frankly, Ryan really captured the essence of the report and I think he highlighted it pretty well. So I think we're ready for questions.

Q: Yeah, this is Jeff MacCausland, sir, with CBS. Can you talk a bit more detail, particularly about the Army. I mean the secretary, frankly, got beat up a little bit beat up today in the press conference I watched. There's been some leaks about reduction in National Guard brigades and shifting force structure to the active, which could make some sense, but it gets people down in communities all exercised (inaudible) interviewed the other day.

So can you talk a little bit specifically about Army, what you're thinking about there force-structure wise, change the National Guard-active mix, those kind of things?

[REDACTED] OK, well the Army is going away, obviously, from the differentiated division concept to modular brigades, 77 of those of the combat brigades. Of those 77, in the reserve component, there will be 28 that will be fully capable and on the par with the active.

In the past, there was – we had 16 enhanced brigades, and not all of those were actually whole brigades. We're moving it up to 28. The brigade structure on the reserve component will stay at 106, but the remaining brigades will be in the combat support, combat service support.

So, from our way of thinking, we are bringing up the reserve component and making them part of the varsity. As we start to develop how we will use these brigades and develop rotational models, then the reserve component will be part of that force generation model for the Army.

So, to be perfectly honest with you, we are a little bit perplexed on the type of responses that we are seeing. Now, in a planning process and as one starts to look at alternatives, all sorts of numbers are thrown around. And I think the reaction you are seeing is it's not that we are decreasing the Guard or taking them down. There is a mentality that says that the highest number that a Guard guy ever saw that what they might be at is not the number we settled at as we worked everything out. So at one point in time there were numbers that were under consideration that were above 28 on the combat brigades, but at no time had anything been finalized, as we balanced everything out, keep them at the same level, 106 total brigades, 28 which are the combat ones, which is up from the 16 quasi-full brigades that they have now.

Q: One quick follow up. Will there be any on the Guard side divisional flags go away? Because that gets them upset even if, you know, the number of brigades stay constant.

█: Right, right. And as you are probably aware, there's a lot of flags around right now to which there aren't necessarily whole units to go with. The number of flags will remain the same. The percentage of flags that have real, viable forces associated with them will go up. But that is not to say that there might not be a handful around that are in the current status that they are now that there's not necessarily a fully associated unit with them. But no flags – to my knowledge – to my knowledge no flags will go away.

So they'll still have the same bragging rights.

Q: Exactly.

Q: Hello. Jed Babbin, American Spectator. Have you guys gotten a sign off from Negroponte and Goss (Porter Goss?) on this? Because what I am hearing is you guys are going to be putting an awful lot more into establishing defense-related intelligence capability and there could be a little bit of a turf war brewing, no?

█ The QDR has been staffed through the NSC, up to the highest levels, in (and?) components that comprise the NSC – the intelligence community, the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, Justice Department, it has also been staffed through those organizations also.

I – we have not solved the problem of the iron major and the titanium colonel, either in our organization or other ones. You will be able to find somebody buried in an organization who somehow feels that his particular parochial interest was not served as fully as he thought. You will not find anybody at the senior levels of the defense establishment – and that's the four stars – that don't believe in this document. That's -- I mean, some of us that have participated in it think that the document itself is just an artifact of the QDR. But really what the QDR was it was a process that brought the department in, looked at a common set of problems, and came up with a cohesive approach to it that everyone buys in.

There – one of the things we get hit for is that there were no major weapon cuts. We didn't kill any major weapon systems in the QDR. Because we had such a collaborative effort, we were able to make large investments in the areas we need to do, without having to do that. And it couldn't have been done if it weren't the Services that were coming forward and saying this is how I can do my part to contribute to be able to shift the balance and where we need to go.

So, I've only been in the Pentagon for three years, but guys that have been through here and sat through all the QDRs say that this was fundamentally different in kind as far as not just the approach at the senior leadership, but as it developed, the collaborative effort, the fact that – and the vices – and maybe █ got a better count than I do – but I would say the vices put in 500 hours of their time over the last 15, 16 months, in sitting down and collaboratively working with the under secretaries and the deputy and the vice chairman in trying to come up and work through these solutions.

And we couldn't get to where we did if this wouldn't have represented – the spirit wouldn't have been one of that we are all in this together and we have to come up with common solutions.

We also, as far as inclusivity, brought in on many of our meetings members of the Department of Homeland Security, the CIA; we actually had some of our key allies participate in our internal discussions. And so this was much more inclusive than it's been in the past, too.

So, you know, there might be some people who feel that they were injured but we are not aware of anybody at a leadership level anywhere in the government that feels uncomfortable with this report.

And just to put an asterisk to the question on Ambassador Negroponte, Office of the Secretary of Defense folks that are the intel side of the house is working very closely continuous process working with the director of national intelligence and the CIA. So there's been an awful lot of crosstalk during the development of this QDR and continuing onward with balancing the capabilities that are represented in all those three organizations.

Mr. Ruff: More questions?

Q: If nobody else is going to jump in, it's Jed Babbin for one more. You've mentioned a term and you just scared the liver out of me, guys. Nuclear IED?

Yeah, I mean if – let's face it, we've got some bad guys out there that are trying to develop a full nuclear full cycle, and have the ability to produce fissile material. This is all about what the (? Response) to the global war on terrorism. It is weapons of mass destruction. It is a globalization mechanism which allows the movement of materials and ideas in a network world, and it is the emergence of terrorist organizations that have no limit to the amount of terror that they are willing to put on any nation or any group of people to get to their political ends.

And the nexus of those three things is what keeps us up at night.

Q: Forgive me for interrupting but I think one of things that I am hearing is that if it is a new term, it's got to be an identifiable threat. Is this near or longer term?

We have countries that are producing nuclear materials that are not under the non-proliferation treaty right now. So it is a possibility of which we cannot ignore. And I mean it is the high end, worse case. It doesn't necessarily – a nuclear IED is not necessarily something that would have to go critical, and it could just have a radiological dispersion aspect of it -- known as an RDD – radiological dispersion device.

And the other thing is is the QDR is given a responsibility to look out in the next 20 years. When we go to the intelligence community and ask them to look into the future, and to give us an assessment of where we are going to be, they can do it with a certain degree of accuracy out to five years.

The world we live in right now though, going out 10 years is an extremely iffy exercise, one that they feel uncomfortable with. And they will not venture out to the 20-year mark because the world's just too uncertain; we cannot predict which way things are going to go. The enemy is evolving too fast to be able to do any sort of linear extrapolation.

And so we have a responsibility in looking out at that 20 years to be able to address all feasible threats and to try to anchor what the high-end one is. And a terrorist with a – with a – with fissile material, and with a little bit of know-how, is the worst-case scenario.

That coupled though – I would say that's on a par with a terrorist with bio-warfare knowledge, too, or access to bio-warfare materials. Both of those are the high end one.

Q: Thank you.

Q: This is Jeff MacCausland again. There's been a lot of leaks, and I emphasize the words leaks, so you can say that's not necessarily true, that one of the things this report is going to say to the shifting of a particular number of forces – particularly air and naval – from, frankly, the Atlantic to the Pacific. Can you talk about that for a second?

And also, how do you see balancing the effort to, if you will, find a good relationship with the Chinese as opposed to creating a force structure that they find threatening and then we end up, you know, fulfilling our own prophecies?

Right. I mean that's a -- let me deal with the latter one, the Pacific and stuff like that. I mean, stability is the coin of the realm in the Pacific. It's not subject to an alliance structure like the Atlantic is. The U.S. is a force for stability in the region. I think it's recognized by all. We don't use our forces out there in an aggressive nature.

By the same token, for operational responsiveness, the timelines due to the distance involved are significantly different in the Pacific, so we need to have things forward. Our ability to respond with 17,000 troops within one week of the Banda Aceh tsunami, to be able to be delivering relief, we could not have done if we didn't have our forward basing and forward presence structure that we have there.

In order to do that, there will be a shift of maritime toward the Pacific. We talked about that in QDR '01; we continue to talk about that in QDR '06. And you'll probably see some specific metrics in the report that will very discretely deal with that.

In the Atlantic -- the Atlantic is a -- to maintain our traditional relationship with NATO, to encourage the transformation of NATO from a Cold War structure to one that can make a difference to the world we live in. Obviously you're aware that we're doing ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) out-of-area ops there in Afghanistan, and we're working with them on the NATO response force, and we're having discussions on other areas as we'll go to Werkunde (Germany) and the ministerial is coming up here in couple of months on areas that NATO can continue to grow there. But it probably doesn't require the same force structure that it did during the Cold War.

Q: Thank you.

Mr. Ruff: OK, we'll just recap here. We'll get this material out to you, and I know one or two folks asked if they could get a transcript of this just for your own personal use and the answer is yes, we'll give you that. It's on background.

And I would just add one last thing and that is, you know, there's been a lot of discussion in building and QDR is certainly part of this umbrella in the long war. And just for your SA (situational awareness), you're going to be seeing in the days and weeks ahead the secretary and leadership in this building talking more about this long war and what the components are. And I would just give you that as something to be watching out for as we go forward with speeches and things like that.

OK? Thanks everybody.

(end of call).