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**DEFENSE REFORM
AN OUT OF THE BOX APPROACH**

BY

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Defense Reform

An Out of the Box Approach

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27 April 1998

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ABSTRACT

Despite several studies such as the Bottom Up Review (BUR), Commission on Roles and Missions (CORM), Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), and National Defense Panel (NDP), there is no coherent, workable plan for implementing significant defense reform. As a result, America's armed forces are being "salami sliced" to a smaller version of a the cold war force as resources continue to decline. Scarce resources are being spent on expensive weapons systems that no longer have a mission in the new uncertain threat environment of the 21st Century. The Congress has not been effective in implementing significant reform and will not be so in the future. The services are focused on maintaining their share of the defense budget rather than moving toward true reform. The present program is unaffordable and the problems will worsen as systems hit block obsolescence and resources continue to decline. The paper proposes a "BRAC like" commission to review programs and force structure and recommend savings of \$10 billion per year to begin funding the transition. The President and Congress would have the option of accepting or rejecting but not modifying the commission's recommendations.

The Department of Defense is currently facing the problem of how to change the armed forces of the United States to meet the new challenges of the 21st Century. Despite the results of the 1993 Bottom-Up Review (BUR), the 1995 Commission on Roles and Missions (CORM) report, the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), and the 1997 National Defense Panel (NDP), there is no coordinated, coherent plan or transition strategy for changing the military services. Leadership for changing the services could come from inside or outside of the Department of Defense. It has come from neither. Both the Executive Branch and the Congress have the power to begin transforming the military but neither branch has accepted the challenge. The Department of Defense and the services have been equally reticent to lead the transformation. Currently, there is no workable process for making and implementing the tough interservice decisions that will be required to significantly change the Department of Defense.

The world has undergone a period of remarkable change since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989. The United States remains the world's lone superpower with no projected peer competitor on the near horizon until around 2015. There are still challenges for the military despite the lack of a peer competitor. Regional conflicts, instability from failing or developing states, humanitarian operations, and peacekeeping are some of the problems that the future military will face with increasing frequency. The Congressional Research Service stated that US forces have been deployed in 36 foreign missions since

1990, compared with 22 missions between 1980 and 1989¹ and there are no indications that the deployment frequency will decrease. Recent operations in Rwanda, Haiti, Somalia, and the former Yugoslavia illustrate the types of challenges that the military services will more frequently continue to face. Peacekeeping operations provide another good example. There have been 42 United Nations Peacekeeping operations, with over fifteen hundred fatalities, since 1945. Twenty-nine of these operations have occurred between 1988 and the present and there are 16 ongoing operations². The United States military will continue to be challenged despite the lack of a monolithic threat as the nation continues remain globally engaged to support its vital interests.

The nature of the threats that the military and the nation will face has also changed. The United States was not the only nation to have lessons-learned from the high-tech victory in Desert Storm. It is doubtful that future adversaries will attempt to challenge the United States military with large scale armored assaults, air to air combat, or for control of the seas. Charles Dunlap, in his excellent article, How We Lost the High-Tech War of 2007³, describes a chilling fictional scenario of how a future adversary might effectively challenge the United States with asymmetric means. The US experience in Mogadishu and the Russian experience in Chechnya provide some useful insights into the types of situations that the future military will be called upon to more frequently deal with and how a relatively low-tech force can cause serious problems for a high-tech force. Chemical, biological, and even nuclear terrorism could also be employed

by potential adversaries seeking to circumvent and undermine US strengths and take advantage of vulnerabilities. The bottom line is that the world will continue to be dangerous and the United States needs to have the right types of forces and equipment to meet these threats and challenges.

The demise of the former Soviet Union as an adversary and monolithic threat has greatly complicated the planning process for the Department of Defense. During the cold war, weapons systems and force structure could easily be justified and benchmarked against plans to fight a high intensity conflict on the European plains. The world is still dangerous but the threats are more diverse and difficult to identify.

Change in the Department of Defense and the services has been substantially less remarkable. The military certainly has become smaller. The budget has been cut by almost 35 percent since 1988. Military and civilian manpower has been cut by around 30 percent during the same period. What has not changed substantially is the percentage of the Department of Defense budget that each of the services receive each year. The Army historically receives around 24 percent of the budget, the Navy and Air Force each receive around 30 percent, and the remaining 15 percent funds the Defense Agencies. The budget percentages are not significant. What is significant is the lack of change since the cold war ended. The result is a smaller version of the cold war military that is not necessarily the optimal force to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. Rather than having a well reasoned transition plan, as

recommended by the NDP, to support a vision of what the services should become, the Department of Defense is merely muddling through or “salami slicing” as the funding for defense decreases and the force shrinks. Each of the services retain their historic percentages of the defense budget and significant change eludes the Department of Defense.

So what? Some analysts would argue that there is no pressing need for change since the United States is the world’s only superpower, there is no present serious threat to the homeland, and the armed forces of the United States are capable of defeating any country . There are several problems with this line of reasoning. First and foremost, the present defense program is unaffordable and heading for what has been termed a “trainwreck”⁴ or “meltdown”. Procurement funding is not sufficient to replace existing equipment and the problem only gets worse in the future as major systems age, replacement costs increase, and the defense budget continues to decline. Secondly, the current force is loaded with weapons systems that are cold war relics that are not well suited for dealing with the diffuse threats and regional patterns of violence that the United States is likely to face in the coming years. The Brookings Institution has questioned the suitability of “forces configured to defeat and deter classic forms of aggression for dealing with more diffuse patterns of violence that are now emerging as the principal security problem”.⁵ Lastly, the United States may not have another window of opportunity for change with so little risk. The lack of a peer competitor and the relative strength of our

armed forces minimize the risk that the United States will face if we decide to enter a period of significant change. Because of long required lead times for developing and fielding new weapons systems, doctrine, and organizations, decisions made today will have significant impacts on the military services ten to twenty years from now.

There are serious affordability concerns with the current Department of Defense program. Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger stated in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee "Quite simply you can't get there, that desired point in the 21st Century, from here--given the apparent fiscal limits"⁶. The Government Accounting Office (GAO) recently issued reports discussing the risk in the Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP)⁷ and more specifically, the affordability of DoD's investment strategy in acquiring aircraft.⁸

GAO analysis noted that the portion of the DoD budget devoted to infrastructure had not decreased as planned and labeled the projected savings as "questionable". The GAO also questioned the billions of dollars in savings from management initiatives without details. The most serious problem that the GAO commented on was the cost of the Defense Health Care Program. The Defense Health Care Program was underbudgeted in 1997 and Congress appropriated additional funds for it. The 1997 FYDP also projected a defense health care program growth rate of 5.8 percent per year in real terms for the period 1998 through 2001. The 1998 FYDP reduced funding for health care and projected no real growth for the program for the same period despite the fact that

health care costs had increased by 73 percent during the years 1985 through 1996. GAO further questioned whether DoD would be able to increase spending on procurement without increasing spending on Operations and Maintenance (O &M). "Since 1965, spending for O & M has increased consistently with spending for procurement"⁹. GAO's bottom line assessment for the DoD program is not optimistic. Planned savings may not occur or could be less than planned, cost projections for health care are unrealistic, and the Department of Defense will have to reverse a thirty year trend in the relationship between O & M spending and procurement spending if the program is to be executable.

The GAO was more pessimistic about the affordability of the aircraft acquisition program. GAO recommended that "DoD needs to bring its aircraft investment strategy into line with more realistic, long-term projections of overall defense funding, as well as the amount of procurement funding expected to be available for aircraft purchases"¹⁰. Aircraft purchases have historically been around 4.8 percent of the total Department of Defense budget. The current program calls for spending around \$335 billion to purchase almost four thousand (4,000) tactical combat aircraft which would exceed the historic average for procurement as a percentage of the Defense budget in all but one year for the period between fiscal year 2000 and 2015 and rise to over 45 per cent of the Defense budget during the later years. In addition to these observations, GAO noted that the Department of Defense cost projections reflect no program growth yet the historic data indicates that program growth tends to be around 20

percent. Current aircraft procurement numbers also do not include funding for replacement systems for several current systems such as the KC-135, C-5A, F-15E, F-117, and EA-6B. GAO also noted that billions of dollars programmed for aircraft acquisition will be generated through infrastructure reductions or management efficiencies yet no details about these savings are available.

Another affordability question confronting DoD is replacement costs for systems that came into being in the early to mid 1980s under the Reagan build-up and will begin to reach the end of their service life. There is general agreement the procurement accounts are underfunded. The only question is about the magnitude of the underfunding. One estimate from the Brookings Institution states that it would take \$60 billion in procurement for the next 20 years to replace aging equipment with newer systems being developed¹¹. The Department of Defense Budget for fiscal year 1999 procurement is \$48.7 billion and does not reach the \$60 billion per year procurement level until fiscal year 2000.

Significant change will be expensive and there are no readily available sources of funds to apply against the problem. The defense budget has been less than 4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 1994 and there are no signs of any plans to increase defense spending in the near future. A recent analysis of the President's fiscal year 1999 budget performed by the Congressional Budget Office shows that defense spending as a percentage of gross national product (GNP) will continue to decline. Defense spending in 1998

was 3.2 percent of the GNP but is projected to be only 2.8 percent of the GNP by 2003. This is the smallest percentage of the GNP dedicated to defense since the 1930s. Pressure to balance the budget, fix social security, and spending for other social programs is likely to increase the pressure to decrease defense spending even further. It is going to be difficult to convince the American public that more of the budget needs to be applied toward defense when the United States is the world's only superpower and there is not a readily identifiable threat to our way of life.

Base closures and realignments (BRAC) and management efficiencies have also been suggested as possible sources of transition funding for the Department of Defense. While both BRAC and business efficiencies will provide significant sources of funding for DoD, there are problems in both areas and it is doubtful that sufficient funding will be provided. The Government Accounting Office is skeptical of savings from both areas and has recently issued reports stating "The 1998 FYDP projects billions of dollars in savings due to management initiatives, but DoD does not have details on how all of the savings will be achieved"¹² and "savings from infrastructure reductions have too often not been as large as anticipated and tended to be absorbed by unplanned or underestimated expenses in day to day operations"¹³.

BRAC deserves a closer look because the Department of Defense is relying so heavily on BRAC savings to finance the future. There have been four BRAC rounds, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, authorized by special legislation that

recommended closing 97 of 495 major domestic installations and many smaller facilities. All of the facilities identified for closure in previous rounds are to be closed by 2001. Estimated savings from these base closures are \$5.6 billion per year. The Department of Defense and the GAO agree that despite the ongoing base closing and realignments, the services are still maintaining and paying for significant amounts of excess infrastructure. The Congress has ignored repeated requests to authorize further base closings and does not seem inclined to change its position in the near term. Senator Joel Hefley (R-CO) responded to the QDR recommendation for two additional rounds of base closings with the comment "Over my dead body"¹⁴. Congressional authorization for future BRAC rounds may also be more difficult to obtain because of the feeling that the process was politicized through the "privatization in place" recommendation for depots in Texas and California.

BRAC related savings have been significant but not as significant as the Department of Defense had been planning for. Environmental costs for cleaning closed facilities have been much higher than expected and revenues from projected land sales have been much lower than expected. Both of these factors have combined to lower expected revenues from the BRAC process and to push the time at which expected savings could start to be realized into the future. Service accounting systems are designed to record expenditures rather than reflect savings so it has been difficult to exactly measure infrastructure savings. The services have been reluctant in some cases to identify savings because they

fear that their budgets will be reduced by Congress or the Department of Defense and proceeds from the savings will be applied outside of the service generating the savings. The GAO also noted that the entire process could have been more effective if the services would have cooperated better with each other during the BRAC rounds.

Saving from BRAC and good business practices are significant but there are problems measuring the savings and the amount of these savings is sure to be less than DoD was planning on having available. While the exact amount of the savings is unclear, it is very clear that these savings are not going to be sufficient to fund the current defense program, much less the Department of Defense's transformation to a 21st Century Force. Other funding sources are going to be required for DoD to accomplish any meaningful transformation. Since additional defense spending is extremely unlikely, the Department of Defense is going to be forced to find another method of funding the transformation.

Representative Curt Weldon, R-PA, House National Security Committee, recently stated that there is little support in Congress or the American public for increased defense spending.¹⁵ Since it is extremely unlikely that additional funds will be added to the defense budget, the services are going to have to fund any transition themselves in a period of declining defense spending combined with the knowledge that projected savings from infrastructure reductions and efficiencies are going to be insufficient. Additional savings are going to have to

be generated through some combination of reductions in force structure, cancellation of major weapons system programs, additional infrastructure reductions, and efficiencies. The problem is complicated and there is no correct single answer on the best way to generate additional savings. Each of the services have their own vision of the best method of generating additional funding and the vision usually involves funds from another service's budget. The service with the smallest share of the procurement account, the Army, would like to fund the transformation with funds from systems that had a mission during the cold war but have limited utility in today's changed environment. The Air Force and Navy both view cuts in force structure as the best source of funds to transition the services. All of the services agree that they are still maintaining excess infrastructure, but the likelihood of Congress agreeing to additional base closures is problematic at best at this point in time.

Additional funds can certainly be generated by additional force structure cuts. Michael O'Hanlon at the Brookings Institution has speculated that the Department of Defense could save \$4 billion per year by only eight active duty Army divisions and save \$2 billion per year by cutting to eight National Guard Division equivalents. An additional \$4 billion per year could be saved by reducing to eight aircraft carrier battle groups¹⁶. While force structure cuts would yield significant savings, it is unclear how effective a smaller force would be in supporting the country's foreign policy program. All of the services have been concerned about the impacts of today's high operational tempo and more

frequent deployments on the current force. Since there are no indications that the operational tempo is going to decrease or that the United States is going to reduce its commitments abroad, the impacts of significantly cutting force structure need to be carefully analyzed.

Transition funds could also be generated by program adjustments to systems that are relics of the cold war and that don't have a significant mission in supporting military operations of the future. All of the services are guilty of purchasing weapons that had a valid and necessary mission during the cold war but are no longer justified by a present or on the horizon threat. Admiral Owens recommended that a better strategy for modernizing might be to dedicate funds to purchasing better sensors and precision munitions rather than expensive delivery platforms¹⁷. The services have continued to stress expensive weapons systems that tend to take on a life of their own despite the changing world situation. All of the services' major acquisition programs were funded in the President's FY99 budget request. Expensive weapons systems develop constituencies within the services, Congress, and industry and are very difficult to kill unless they are glaringly bad. The A12 program canceled by former Secretary of Defense Cheney is an example of a program that was plagued with problems yet still cost the taxpayers billions of dollars.

The purpose of this paper is not to recommend specific cuts in the program of any service, but there are clearly examples in each service where scarce resources are being spent for questionable gains. The Army's Crusader

artillery system has questionable utility on future battlefields and is not an example of "leap ahead" technology. There are also legitimate questions about the wisdom of spending \$3.2 billion over the FYDP to upgrade all of the Army's tanks to the M1A2 configuration. The Navy's acquisition strategy is also questionable. The Navy is currently decommissioning ships well before the end of their mission life and replacing them with more capable yet more expensive ships. Senator Bumpers recently questioned the wisdom of decommissioning a ship with an advertised service life of 35 years after only 19 years of service when the ship could have easily served for another decade¹⁸. The Navy is also decommissioning Los Angeles class submarines well before the end of their service life and replacing them with \$2.4 billion per submarine Seawolves that carry the same weapons systems. The merits of a new attack submarine, \$7.5 billion over the FYDP, are also questionable as is the need for the number of destroyers the Navy is purchasing now that there is no longer a mission to maintain sea lines of communication or conduct "blue water operations" against the Soviet Navy. Aircraft costs have been mentioned earlier but considering the capabilities of our current aircraft and the near and mid-term threat, it is difficult to justify spending in inordinate amount of scarce Defense resources on F/A-18E/F, F22, and Joint Strike Fighter. While the specific merits and faults of each of these programs can be debated, what is clear from even a cursory examination is that the United States is buying weapons systems that aren't

needed when current and near term threats and the types of missions tomorrow's forces are most likely to face are considered.

At the present time, there is not a workable, efficient process to evaluate the utility of weapons systems and organizations and make recommendations on which systems and organizations should be developed or survive, and which systems should be killed. The Congress, the Department of Defense, as well as the services themselves should theoretically be able to attack the problem to some degree but have not done so.

If past performance is an indicator, Congress is not going to be an effective organization for solving the problem. As stated earlier, expensive weapons receive strong support in Congress from states that manufacture the systems and defense contractors have become extremely talented at spreading work throughout many states to ensure strong support in these states and from their Congressional delegations. It is no accident that the Army's Weapon System Book published by the Assistant Secretary of the Army For Research, Development, and Acquisition highlights which states have contractors that account for five percent or more of each system's value. The other services are equally and in most instances much more adept at garnering Congressional support for weapons systems that provide jobs in districts.

Congress also routinely adds funding to Department of Defense budget requests. The Congress added \$7.5 billion to the 1996 budget request and \$10.5 billion to the 1997 request. The conference report for the House and

Senate Appropriations Committees added around \$4 billion to the procurement request and around \$2 billion for Research and development. Most of the additions are earmarked for specific programs that will provide jobs or other benefits for a Congressman's district. The Congress also voted to override the President's line item veto of 38 programs worth \$287 million that had been added to the Military Construction Appropriation Bill but not requested by the services in this year's defense budget although the total dollar amount was a fraction of the overall defense budget.

The Department of Defense should be able to take significant steps toward reforming itself but progress has been disappointing. There are legitimate questions concerning whether a large bureaucracy is capable of reforming itself. The Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) has not been effective as an instrument for significant reform despite its expanded charter as a result of Goldwater Nichols changes. The JROC is the body responsible for overseeing inter-service tradeoffs and influencing the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS). The JROC provides recommendations to the Chairman of the JCS who influences the PPBS through the Chairman's Program Assessment (CPA) and the Chairman's Program Review (CPR). Considering the state of the current defense program and working backward, it is difficult to come to any conclusion other than that the JROC members, the Vice Chiefs of Staff of each of the services, tend to take a "live and let live" approach unless a program is glaringly bad. This assessment

of the JROC's ineffectiveness was recently echoed in a QDR lessons learned study conducted by the Institute for Defense Analysis. The project cited the JROC as "a hotbed of parochial service-specific views"¹⁹ that did little to further efforts toward jointness. Each of the service Vice Chiefs are unlikely as a JROC member to kill a program that their service is supporting. OSD PA&E reviews the service programs each year but tends to be more of a rubber stamp than a vehicle for reform. It does not seem likely that true reform will come from within the existing system. The services are too focused on maintaining their share of the defense budget and the OSD/JCS staffs are not capable of overcoming the pressure applied by the Congress and companies of the defense industry.

Reviews and studies such as the BUR, CORM, QDR, and NDP have not been effective in producing a plan for significant changes in the Department of Defense. The recently released National Defense Panel report received a lukewarm at best reception, made very few bold recommendations, recommended funding the transition with new rounds of BRAC and management efficiencies, and was basically dismissed by Secretary Cohen with a "thanks for your interest in National Security" response to the Senate Committee on Armed Services. The Secretary of Defense ignored comments on the wisdom of continuing to fund programs such as the Army's Comanche scout helicopter, additional aircraft carriers for the Navy, and the F-22, JSF, and FA-18E/F aircraft acquisitions. The Joint Staff's response to the report was equally bland. The Secretary of Defense did create a "RMA Oversight Council" to monitor service

transition activities and investigate whether in funding levels or activities are warranted²⁰. This appears to be a cosmetic change since all of these functions could and should be performed by the JROC. The previous reviews were equally unsuccessful in beginning meaningful transition.

There does not appear to be any individual member of Congress or group willing and able to start the transition effort. One member of the National Defense Panel noted the lack of a "guiding hand at work fashioning an overall transition strategy"²¹. The Congress is more interested in resisting additional base closings and cuts to any programs that would cost jobs in their home districts than in meaningful defense reform which promises to be painful as systems and organizations without missions or not suited to support the transition are canceled or greatly reduced in scope. It is also disingenuous on the part of the services and the Department of Defense to ask the Congress to withstand the political pain of additional rounds of base closures while not making the tough decisions to help themselves by cancelling unnecessary or redundant programs. The services, the defense industry, and defense workers are very skilled at applying pressure to gain Congressional support to maintain programs and jobs.

Another alternative that has been suggested is to accept some risk and skip a generation of procurement while continuing research and development on promising technologies. Under this plan, the services would upgrade current systems and extend system life with service life extension programs (SLEPS) while experimenting. The Army is presently upgrading systems such as the

Apache to the Apache Longbow and the Navy could easily extend service life of some of its ships by replacing the nuclear fuel at much less cost than buying a new ship. This course of action would require monitoring systems being developed and fielded by other nations but in the case of aircraft, there is some logic in deferring procurement of the F22 and F/A-18E/F until there is something flying that can threaten current platforms. New F15Es, F16s or F/A-18C/Ds could be purchased at a significantly reduced price to replace losses or systems that were not mission capable. The same logic can be applied to the Navy submarine and carrier programs. There may be certain areas where a minimum amount of procurement will have to occur to maintain production capability, but these cases are manageable. This strategy would also provide the \$6 to \$10 billion per year that the NDP estimated would be necessary for transformation.

Another possible solution for beginning to attack the problem might be a "BRAC like" committee appointed by the President with the approval of Congress with the mission of examining service programs and organizations and recommending which should survive and which are relics that are no longer needed. The immediate goal of the committee could be to generate the \$6 billion to \$10 billion annually that will be required for a transition. Similar to the BRAC recommendations, Congress and the President would have the option of accepting the recommendations in their entirety or rejecting the entire report. The committee would have to be bi-partisan and contain members with tremendous stature and defense knowledge. One possible source of

membership for the committee would be former warfighting CINCs. Accepting the recommendations of a bi-partisan committee might also provide the political cover that members of Congress need to support meaningful defense reform..

The Department of Defense and the entire country are facing problems that will not go away with a "business as usual approach" and will only get worse in the future unless we take action now. One thing that is certain is that the world will continue to be dangerous. The dangers will not be the same as those faced in the past but will be real nonetheless. The Department of Defense and the military services need to significantly change to develop and field organizations and weapons system best suited to combat these new challenges. The alternative is to keep "muddling through" while the services' capabilities continue to slowly erode. This path leads to a future where the military is not capable of supporting our foreign policy program and the program will have to be adjusted downward to a level that can be supported with diminished military capabilities. Serious change is possible but it would take leadership or a bold new approach. Phil Odeen, Chairman of the National Defense Panel, put it most realistically when he stated that he doesn't see the type of serious leadership in the Pentagon required to affect real change²². The Department of Defense is going to change significantly. It is a question of when rather than if the change will occur. What remains to be seen is whether it will require a crisis to force meaningful change or if reforms can be made during this historic window of opportunity.

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