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Not So Much to Say About Homeland Security—What’s Missing from the Pentagon’s Vision for its Future Role in Safeguarding U.S. Soil

By James Jay Carafano

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), released in February of 2006, outlines the Pentagon’s strategy for addressing critical issues like budget and acquisition priorities, emerging threats, and necessary military capabilities. While this mandatory report to the President and the Congress offers a satisfactory strategy to meet the nation’s short-term national security needs, it does not adequately address long-term requirements, particularly preparing for homeland security missions and sustaining and transforming the National Guard.

What is missing from the QDR is an initiative to develop significant new capabilities to perform important missions such as homeland security. If, five years from now, the U.S. military has to assist in a disaster similar Katrina, the Pentagon’s response will look pretty much the same as it does today. The QDR did not require developing the kinds of forces needed to respond to such contingencies. In particular, it did little to address needed capabilities on land, air or sea, and most specifically the role of the National Guard which will be essential for homeland security missions. Nor did the QDR adequately the fiscal challenges of ensuring the guard will have sufficient and appropriate equipment and the right kinds and numbers of units for its future tasks.

What the QDR Says

The QDR details many of the Department’s post-9/11 initiatives to enhance the role of the military in homeland security. These included establishing the U.S. Northern Command; creating an Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense; expanding the number of Civil Support Teams, creating joint headquarters within each state; and standing-up National Guard Enhanced Response Force Packages.¹ The report well summarizes and explains the military’s role in implementing the *National Maritime Security Policy* and its own *Strategy Homeland Defense and Civil Support*.² Beyond these contributions, the QDR has little to contribute. The Pentagon offers less a vision of the future and more of an explanation of the status quo.

What’s Missing

In contrast to the QDR, the finding of the White House’s lessons learned report on the national response to the disaster in the wake of Hurricane Katrina called for a

¹ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 6, 2006, pp. 15-16. See also, James Jay Carafano, “Citizen Soldiers and Homeland Security: A Strategic Assessment,” Lexington Institute, March 2004.

² *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, pp. 25-27. See also, James Jay Carafano, “Defense Department’s Serious Thinking About Homeland Security” July 8, 2005, Heritage Web Memo #790.

“transformation” of the National Guard.³ The White House report did not call for making the guard a domestic security force, but it did argue the guard needed force structure, training, and equipment more suited to its domestic response missions. The White House report, however, was short on details. That was left to the Pentagon. The QDR, however, gives little insight into what these forces may look like. That’s a problem. I believe they ought to be large and robust, and dual-use, suitable for domestic missions at home and many of the tasks our military is called on to perform overseas.

Why a Transformation?

Most disasters, including terrorist attacks, can be handled by emergency responders. Only catastrophic disasters—events that overwhelm the capacity of state and local governments— require a large-scale response.

In “normal” disasters, whether they are terrorist strikes like 9/11 or a natural disaster such as a flood or snow storm, a tiered-response is employed. Local leaders turn to state resources when they are exhausted. In turn, states turn to Washington when their means are exceeded. Both local and state leaders play a critical role in effectively communicating their requirements to federal officials and managing the response. In most disasters local resources handle things in the first hours and days until national resources can be requested, marshaled, and rushed to the scene. That usually takes days. With the exception of a few federal assets such as Coast Guard and Urban Search and Rescue, teams don’t roll in until well after the response is well under way.

In catastrophic disasters, tens-or-hundreds of thousands of lives are immediately at risk. State and local resources may well be exhausted from the onset and government leaders unable to determine or communicate their priority needs. And unlike New York after 9/11 there were few places for communities to turn for immediate help. Surrounding cities could quickly pitch in, over intact bridges, roads, and waterways. The small communities around cities like New Orleans, Biloxi, and Baton Rouge had little extra capacity before the storm. Now they have their own problems. National resources have to show-up in hours, not days in unprecedented amounts, regardless of the difficulties. That’s a very different requirement for mounting a national response to normal disasters. In a catastrophic disaster the national response needs to be immediate, massive, and effective, not just because unprecedented numbers of people and property are at risk, but because the credibility of government at all levels are at risk as well. If citizens perceive the government response as credible that perception will measurably defuse the tension, fear, and frustration that accompanies the wake of a disaster and it prompts communities to be more self-confident and resilient in their own responses to the disaster.

Having the military play a prominent role in the immediate response to catastrophic disasters makes sense. It would be counterproductive and ruinously expensive for other federal agencies, local governments, or the private sector to maintain the excess capacity and resources needed for immediate catastrophic response. On the other hand,

³ James Jay Carafano and Laura Keith, “Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned: Solid Recommendations,” February 23, 2006, Web Memo #998.

maintaining this capacity would have real utility for the military. The Pentagon could use response forces for tasks directly related to its primary warfighting jobs—such as theater support to civilian governments during a conflict, counterinsurgency missions, and postwar occupation—as well as homeland security. Furthermore, using military forces for catastrophic response would be in accordance with constitutional principles and would not require changing existing laws. These forces would mostly be National Guard soldiers, which are the troops that have the flexibility to work equally well under state or federal control.

What Would Transformed Forces Look Like

There is a role for the Army, Air Force, and Navy in transforming the National Guard to provide the kinds of capabilities needed for the right force.

Land Forces

The land force needs to be large enough to maintain some units on active duty at all times for rapid response and sufficient to support missions at home and abroad. For catastrophic response, four components would need to be particularly robust: medical, security, critical infrastructure response, and oversight (Inspector General).

Medical. The United States does not have the capacity to provide mass military medical assets that are well-suited for dealing with catastrophic casualties. The current defense medical support available for homeland security is too small and ill-suited for the task. Rather than field hospitals that take days and weeks to move and set up, the military needs a medical response that can deal with thousands of casualties on little notice, deploy in hours, assess and adapt existing structures for medical facilities, and deliver mass care to people in place rather than moving them to clinical facilities.

Security. Virtually no American community is prepared to deal with widespread disorder, particularly in an environment where infrastructure is widely disrupted or degraded. These will require a military response using specially trained and equipped personnel who are practiced at working with civilian agencies. These troops should prove equally adept at conducting counterinsurgency operations in urban terrain overseas, where neutralizing the enemy and protecting civilian lives and property are equally important. This force should look much more like a constabulary unit than tradition infantry forces or military police.

Critical Infrastructure. The U.S. military has the command, control, and assets and units capable of providing for immediate reconstitution and protection of critical resources; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has the capacity and expertise to manage large-scale contracts under difficult, stressful conditions; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which frequently partners with the military for disaster response, has the expertise to conduct needs assessments and coordinate community recovery. Response teams reinforced with a large cadre of Reserve contracting officers could be

paired with the Corps of Engineers and FEMA to provide an effective infrastructure protection and recovery force for disasters at home or overseas.

Oversight. Any large-scale response will raise concerns about inefficiency, fraud, waste, and abuse. Maintaining the credibility of the response from the outset is essential. The response will undoubtedly involve multiple agencies. A Special Inspector General will need to be established to provide trust and confidence that operations are being performed in an appropriate and transparent manner. This inspector general capability should be built into the force from the start and its mandate should include looking at intergovernmental and interagency coordination, program management, acquisition and contract management, and human resources.

Air

Homeland security forces should be self-deployable and self-sustaining and capable of operating in austere environments where critical infrastructure is significantly degraded. The Air Force's efforts to enhance its expeditionary airfield capability overseas will be well-suited to domestic security in the United States. The Air Force needs to develop a strategic plan to base its Air National Guard forces that support these missions in coordination with the land response forces. In addition, the Air Force's Light Cargo Aircraft program will be essential for future domestic security missions. Finally, the Air Force should look to reduce its less necessary in traditional air security missions such as air patrols, these missions might be more properly done by the Coast Guard and Customs Border Protection Air assets in the Department of Homeland Security and ground based defense systems.⁴ On the other hand, there is clearly a role for the service to participate in theater and cruise missile defenses that might be needed to protect the U.S. homeland under some contingencies.⁵

Sea

The emerging potential for maritime threats and low-altitude attacks, as well as the utility of maritime forces in responding to many catastrophic disasters also augurs the need for an organizational structure that better utilizes the Navy's capacity to support homeland security. Several states with maritime interests already have state naval militias. In fact, the New York Naval Militia assisted in the response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Creating a Navy Guard to include all coastal states would offer several advantages. A Navy Guard would provide coastal states with more resources to address their state maritime security and public safety requirements. Unlike the Coast Guard, the Navy Guard would focus on state needs when not on active federal service. It would also provide an organization within the National Guard and the Navy that treats homeland

⁴ Jack Spencer and James Jay Carafano, "The Use of Directed-Energy Weapons to Protect Critical Infrastructure," August 2, 2004 (Backgrounder #1783), at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg1783.cfm.

⁵ James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., and Alane Kochems, "Making the Sea Safer: A National Agenda for Maritime Security and Counterterrorism," Special Report #03, February 17, 2003, pp. 10-11. www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=74871

security missions as an inherent responsibility and would work to develop the requisite competencies and capabilities to fully support these tasks. Finally, a Navy Guard would provide a suitable partner for the U.S. Coast Guard to ensure seamless integration of daily the Defense and Homeland Security departments' maritime operations.

What About the Forgotten Guard

As the Pentagon considers how it will implement the White House mandate to transform the National Guard, it should give some serious consideration to a too long neglected issue –the appropriate role of State Defense Forces in the national response.

U.S. law allows states to raise and maintain state defense forces (SDF). These forces can be critical to states when their National Guard forces are deployed on federal missions. And, as the emergency response to Hurricane Katrina demonstrated, these groups can be an important supplement to the National Guard, particularly during catastrophic disasters. When trained, disciplined, and well organized, local responders are essential for providing immediate aid and security. The Pentagon should play a role in encouraging states to better organize, train, equip and plan for the employment of these volunteer units.⁶

How Do We Pay for This?

There is no money in the defense budget for the kinds of transformation that is really needed to fulfill the White House mandate. Indeed, there is not enough money in the proposed long-term spending plans for the Pentagon to pay for the force envisioned by the QDR. The QDR's greatest failure is that it did not alert Americans to this danger.

In the periods following World War II and the Vietnam War, the United States had what is referred to as a “hollow force”—insufficient resources to provide for adequate training, new weapons and equipment, and ongoing operations. The United States must prevent the hollow force from recurring.⁷ The danger of returning to a hollow force is real. Few would believe that the share of the U.S. economy devoted to defense spending is actually *projected to decrease*, but a new study by the Congressional Budget Office reveals that this is in fact the case. The defense budget as a proportion of U.S. GDP fell from an average of 6 percent in the 1980s to 4 percent in the 1990s. The CBO now predicts that defense spending will drop to 3 percent of GDP by 2011 and 2.4 percent by 2024.⁸

⁶ James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., and John R. Brinkerhoff, “Katrina’s Forgotten Responders: State Defense Forces Play a Vital Role,” Executive Memorandum #984, October 5, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/em984.cfm

⁷ James Jay Carafano and Paul Rosenzweig, *Winning the Long War: Lessons from the Cold War for Defeating Terrorism and Preserving Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2005), p. 34, at www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/the-long-war-ch1.

⁸ Congressional Budget Office, “The Long -Term Implications of Current Defense Plans and Alternatives: A Summary Update for Fiscal Year 2006,” p. 8, at www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/67xx/doc6786/10-17-LT_Defense.pdf (December 9, 2005).

The defense budget is heading in the wrong direction, and given the projected growth in entitlement spending, the problem is likely to grow worse in the long term. Given the threats, this path is too dangerous to take. Sustained long-term budget increases over those currently projected by the CBO are necessary to ensure that America's forces are prepared for an unpredictable future. The QDR failed to make the case for higher defense spending nor did it highlight that lack of entitlement and tax reform are becoming national security issues, because the lack of will to address these problems will mean there won't be enough to pay for the defense we need in the 21st century. The President and Congress will have to address the entitlement and tax reform issues to create any credible hope that their will be enough in future defense budgets to pay for the transformation of the force.

Even if there is enough money in future defense budgets to pay for the military we need, transformation of the National Guard won't occur without some fundamental changes in how we fund the force. The Total Force Concept is inadequate and counterproductive.⁹ A suitable replacement for the Total Force Concept would have to achieve three critical objectives.

- Future Army investments must balance needs to sustain a trained and ready force, modernization, and current operations, ensuring that the Army does not again become a hollow force.
- Reserve Component policies and programs must be revamped and resourced to increase the capacity of citizen soldiers to respond rapidly to the wide range of emerging missions.
- Defense leaders--civilian, Active, and Reserve--must abandon their commitment to traditional policies and force structures that had the virtue of preserving the status quo but limited the value of Reserve forces to adapting to future needs.

Perhaps most of all, the military requires a new funding paradigm--a paradigm where National Guard needs are no longer an afterthought.

⁹ James Jay Carafano, "The Army Reserves and the Abrams Doctrine: Unfulfilled Promise, Uncertain Future," Heritage Lecture #869, April 18, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/hl869.cfm.