



**Testimony before the
House Armed Services Subcommittee on
Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities**

**“Implementing the GWOT Strategy:
Overcoming Interagency Problems”**

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A Statement by

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The Problem

The “long war” against violent extremists (a.k.a. the Global War on Terrorism) is a central element of U.S. national security strategy today, and will likely remain so for years to come. Yet despite strong bipartisan consensus on the importance of this effort and recent organizational reforms, the U.S. government’s counterterrorism activities have been hampered by at least four challenges:

- Until this month, the United States did not have a clear, overarching strategy for the long war;
- Today, the U.S. government still lacks a comprehensive, interagency concept of operations for counterterrorism, leaving the division of roles and responsibilities among the myriad agencies unclear in some areas, particularly those involving threats to the U.S. homeland;
- Interagency integration in intelligence analysis, planning and resource allocation for counterterrorism remains inadequate; and
- The absence of a culture of “jointness” among the U.S. government agencies involved undermines unity of effort.

In practice, these challenges pose very real obstacles to the effective formulation and execution of U.S. policies to deter, prevent, defeat and mitigate the consequences of global terrorism. Almost five years into the long war, the national security community needs to move beyond the debate over the 2004 intelligence reforms and focus on operationalizing new strategies, roles, and missions, as well as creating the unity of effort necessary for victory.

What is Needed

In order to address these challenges and enhance U.S. effectiveness, the United States needs to undertake a number of critical interagency reforms. Whereas past reform efforts, such as the 2004 Intelligence Reform Act, have been primarily organizational in nature, the next round of reform should focus more on integrating the processes and practices of various agencies and providing incentives to achieve greater unity of effort. Drawing from the analysis in CSIS’ *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols Phase II* report, I would offer the following recommendations for action:

1. Implement the new strategy for the long, global war against violent extremism.

Until this month, there was no overarching U.S. government-wide strategy for prosecuting and winning the long war against violent extremism. Without such a strategy in place, U.S. counterterrorism efforts lacked a strong conceptual foundation, and there was no definitive statement of Presidential intent to guide the actions of individual agencies. Last week, it was reported that the President finally signed National Security Presidential Directive 46/Homeland Security Directive 15 articulating such a strategy. Since this document is classified, Congress should hold closed hearings on the new strategy to ensure that it: 1) clearly articulates U.S. strategic objectives for the war and the desired end state we are seeking to achieve, 2) lays out a coherent strategy that

effectively integrates all of the instruments of U.S. national power and identifies clear priorities and courses of action, and 3) identifies the various capabilities that will be required for success. Assuming the strategy meets these criteria, the administration and the Congress should turn their attention to ensuring its implementation via an interagency concept of operations, the development of strategies and plans in supporting mission areas, and ongoing resource allocation decisions.

2. Develop an interagency concept of operations for counterterrorism.

Today, the division of labor between various agencies of the U.S. government remains murky in critical areas of counterterrorism. In the area of intelligence, for example, John Brennan, who headed both the TTIC and then the NCTC before retiring from the CIA last fall, has written, “The confusion over responsibilities sown by this rush of [reform] initiatives has produced the equivalent of a soccer game played by 7-year olds – departments and agencies cluster around topical issues, bumping into each other and leaving important areas of the intelligence field dangerously unattended....”

In addition, not all of the instruments of U.S. national power have been effectively brought to bear in the long war. Instruments like foreign assistance, trade, and public diplomacy have yet to be fully harnessed to the cause. What’s needed is a comprehensive concept of operations to operationalize the strategy for the war against violent extremism. The purpose of this concept of operations would be to describe *how* the federal government will apply the full range of capabilities at its disposal to achieve its desired objectives or effects. It should also outline major assumptions about the challenges inherent in counterterrorism, including risk assessments that would help prioritize efforts. Presumably, this task should fall to the NCTC given its assigned role of developing “strategic operational planning” for counterterrorism. Once such a concept of operations is in place, it could provide the basis for a family of interagency campaign plans as well as the development of subordinate agency concepts of operations and plans.

3. Assess and prioritize capability shortfalls to guide the U.S. government’s resource allocation for counterterrorism.

The interagency concept of operations and campaign plans should become the basis for deriving a set of prioritized capability requirements. Such requirements, in turn, should provide the basis for assessing whether existing U.S. capabilities are adequate, and where gaps in capabilities may exist. Each agency should use these capability requirements and assessments as essential inputs to its programming and budgeting process. Absent such assessments, administration officials and members of Congress can have little confidence that the nation’s resources are being allocated and used as wisely as possible to strengthen U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

4. Conduct an NSC-OMB-led review of the counterterrorism mission area to ensure the U.S. government is allocating its resources on the basis of its priorities.

Today’s budgeting processes are largely unchanged from the Cold War era. Agencies generally prepare their own budgets in stovepipes. These budgets are keyed to

top-line fiscal guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and to individual agency priorities, but not always to common strategic priorities as articulated in the National Security Strategy or Presidential directives. Furthermore, no consistent process exists for developing budgets across agencies against stated policy priorities.

Going forward, the U.S. government should conduct an interagency mission review of counterterrorism programs and activities to systematically identify gaps, duplication, or misalignment of effort among agencies. In this strengthened review process, NSC staff would seek to ensure that agency budget requests meet the President's policy guidance while OMB staff would seek to ensure that they meet the President's fiscal guidance. The results of this review should not only inform the budget requests of individual agencies, but also provide Congress with a cross-cutting picture of how the U.S. government as a whole is allocating its resources to fight the war on terrorism. Such a cross-cut should, in principle, help to enhance both the effectiveness and the efficiency of U.S. spending on counterterrorism. This does, however, raise a tough question for Congress: How would Congress deal with such a cross-cut given its own stovepiped oversight structure?

5. Ensure the National Counterterrorism Center has the support it needs to be effective in integrating intelligence analysis, conducting "strategic operational" planning, and assigning lead and support responsibilities to agencies.

The National Counterterrorism Center was established to ensure integrated intelligence analysis and "strategic operational" planning for the counterterrorism activities of the U.S. government. In practice, however, it has not yet achieved these goals. To be fair, it is early days, and the Center is still in the process of hiring key personnel and establishing how it is going to do business with interagency partners. Nevertheless, the NCTC's efforts to date have been hampered by a lack of true all-source analysis. While analysts from across the intelligence community do operate side by side, they do so using separate agency computer terminals tied to more than a half a dozen separate databases. This perpetuates the fundamental problem of personnel from different agencies being confined to analytic stovepipes defined by separate bureaucratic hierarchies, legal structures, and cultures.

In addition, the NCTC is still in the initial stages of developing its planning capabilities. Tasked with conducting "strategic operational" planning for counterterrorism activities that integrate all instruments of national power and with assigning operational responsibilities to lead agencies for these activities, the NCTC has a critical role to play in translating strategy into an integrated interagency concept of operations and a family of campaign plans, as described above. Given the criticality of these functions, Congress should ensure that the NCTC has not only the personnel and resources it needs but also critical intangibles such as the full cooperation of key agencies like CIA, NSA, Defense and State, as well as the full backing of the President, the Director for National Intelligence, and the NSC staff when it comes to enforcing tough or controversial decisions.

6. Create incentives for greater "jointness" among interagency personnel.

Over the past two decades, the U.S. military has become a much more “joint” force, able to achieve much greater unity of effort in operations. This “jointness” did not happen by itself. It was the direct result of the incentives created by the 1986 Beyond Goldwater-Nichols legislation, which made joint education and joint duty assignments a requirement for promotion to Flag or General Officer. In an era of complex operations that put a premium on unity of effort at the interagency level, the U.S. government needs a comparable incentive structure for its national security personnel. Congress should work with the national security agencies to develop the appropriate incentives for career professionals to get interagency experience, education and training. Some agencies, like the FBI and CIA, have reportedly begun to tie promotion to higher management levels to interagency training and experience. This should be encouraged and expanded to other agencies as well. In order to make it feasible for managers to spare their most talented personnel for interagency training and rotations, Congress should also approve a 10% personnel float for participating offices and agencies, comparable to what it has long authorized for the U.S. military.

Conclusion

The U.S. government needs to achieve a higher level of unity of effort to be successful in the long war. Congress is in a position to take a number of steps to enhance interagency integration in the counterterrorism domain, including:

- Reviewing the administration’s new strategy for the long war and ensuring that it provides a solid foundation for integrated and effective U.S. counterterrorism efforts.
- Requiring the administration (via the NCTC) to develop an interagency concept of operation and a family of campaign plans for the long war on a specified timeline;
- Requiring the administration to identify its capability requirements for counterterrorism and to submit an assessment of prioritized capability shortfalls that need to be addressed;
- Requiring the administration to present a cross-cut of U.S. government funding for counterterrorism in an effort to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent as effectively and as efficiently as possible;
- Streamlining Congressional committee structures and jurisdictions to ensure effective oversight of complex mission areas like counterterrorism;
- Holding periodic hearings on how the NCTC is functioning and what can be done to ensure that it is able to fulfill its assigned roles effectively; and
- Passing Goldwater-Nichols-like legislation tying the promotion of career national security personnel to interagency education, training and experience in order to promote greater “jointness” at the interagency level and creating the necessary personnel float to make such rotations possible.