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DoD releases latest National Defense Strategy.

The Pentagon's new National Defense Strategy is the latest in a series of Defense Department messages highlighting the need to develop a U.S. foreign policy with greater emphasis on so-called "soft powers" such as diplomacy and international aid.

It also shows a belief that in the future, "Our military is much more likely to engage in asymmetric conflict than conventional conflict against a rising state power. We must be ready for both kinds of conflict and fund the capabilities to do both," Defense Secretary Robert Gates said.

The broad-brush document released in late July includes a section that strikes at the need for greater cooperation, or "jointness," between the department and its interagency partners if American operations abroad are to succeed.

"Iraq and Afghanistan remind us that military success alone is insufficient to achieve victory," the strategy reads. "We must not forget our hard-learned lessons or allow the important soft power capabilities developed because of them to atrophy or even disappear."

Speaking to reporters in the Pentagon July 31, Gates said, "The principal challenge, therefore, is how to ensure that the capabilities gained and counterinsurgency lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the lessons re-learned from other places where we have engaged in irregular warfare over the last two decades, are institutionalized within the defense establishment" instead of being paid for through emergency defense spending bills.

"The danger is not that modernization will be sacrificed to fund asymmetric capabilities, but rather that in the future we will again neglect the latter."

Beyond security, the "essential ingredients" of long-term success include economic development, institution building and enforcing the rule of law, the document states. To achieve these ends, the strategy recommends closer coordination among other U.S. departments and agencies, state and local governments, partners and allies, and international and multilateral organizations.

"A whole-of-government approach is only possible when every government department and agency understands the core competencies, roles, missions, and capabilities of its partners and works together to achieve common goals," it states.

Defense panel recommends sweeping changes in retirement systems.

A panel looking at military compensation has recommended dramatic changes in the military retirement system.

The recommendations are part of the second volume put out by the 10th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation. The first volume—released in March—looked at cash compensation. Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Jan D. "Denny" Eakle was director of the panel, and she briefed the press during a Pentagon news conference Aug. 5.

Eakle said critics of the current military retirement system say it is not equitable, it is not flexible, and it is not efficient. "There is a perception that the system we have today is inequitable because only 15 percent of all enlisted personnel and less than half of officers will ever receive anything in the system," she said.

Reserve component personnel also believe the current system discriminates against them, especially at a time when reserve forces are being called on more, she said.

The retirement proposal would offer a defined benefit, defined contributions, "gate" pays and separation pays. The defined benefit would be 2.5 percent of the average basic pay for the highest 36 months of the individual's career multiplied by the number of years of service, with service members vested at 10 years of service.

Payments to retirees would begin at age 60 for those with less than 20 years of service and at age 57 for those with 20 years of service or more.

Service members could opt for an immediate annuity, but the payout would follow the Federal Employee Retirement System methodology—a 5 percent penalty per year for early withdrawal.

The defined contribution portion would be an automatic government-funded Thrift Savings Plan. Service members would not have to match any government payment.

The government would not put any money in for the first year, but would put in 2 percent of base pay for two years of service, 3 percent for three and four years of service, and 5 percent for five and more years of service. Again, this would be vested after 10 years of service.

Chiarelli sworn in as vice chief. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates promoted Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli to four-star general and Army Secretary Pete Geren administered Chiarelli's oath of office as the Army's 32nd vice chief of staff.

At the Aug. 4 ceremony in the Pentagon, Gates, who was Chiarelli's boss in his most recent position as senior military assistant to the secretary of defense since March 2007, called the ceremony "bittersweet," saying, "I'll miss him. But I can think of no one better to take the job [as Army vice.]"

From moving into a position as the Army's director of operations a month before the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, to commanding the 1st Cavalry Division based at Fort Hood, Texas, in August 2003, and deploying to Iraq as the commander of Task Force Baghdad—from February 2004 to March 2005—Chiarelli hasn't soldiered from the sidelines.

Soon after he arrived in Iraq, eight 1st Cavalry Division soldiers were killed. "He'll never forget their names," Gates said in his introduction. "Pete will tell you that our men and women [in uniform] are our greatest asset," Gates said. The soldiers, in turn, have referred to Chiarelli as everything from "a father figure to a health advisor and marriage counselor," because he cares about soldiers.

"His beliefs [about our purpose in Iraq] only solidified during his second tour in Iraq," Gates said about Chiarelli's role as commander, Multi-National Corps—Iraq from January 2006 to December 2006. "As long as there's a single soldier in harm's way" or a family missing their soldier who's far from home, "Pete will never rest," Gates said.

Today, with 36 years in service to his country, Chiarelli said, "I thank you for your confidence, trust and this opportunity. I look forward to serving as part of your team," he said to Geren. "Your compassionate leadership has been [an inspiration]."

"This is an important day in the life of the Army and in the Chiarelli family," Geren said. "We all know service [in the armed forces] is a family affair," Geren added, as he introduced Chiarelli's wife, Beth, and children, Peter, Erin and Patrick. Chiarelli's mother, Theresa, a daughter-in-law and a granddaughter also attended the event.

On the lighter side, Chiarelli joked that his family has always been willing to "forgive my Type-A-ness," and "Beth, you've always been quick to remind me that I'm just Pete Chiarelli" [a regular guy].

In his role as the Army's vice chief of staff, Chiarelli will serve as the principal advisor and assistant to the chief of staff of the Army.

Ford confirmed as under secretary. Nelson M. Ford became the 29th under secretary of the Army July 24, following his confirmation by the Senate. As the Army's number two civilian leader, Ford serves as deputy and senior advisor to the secretary of the Army.

Ford shares responsibility with the secretary of the Army for resourcing, training and employing the Army, and is designated the department's chief management officer under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008. The Army includes more than 1.3 million active duty, National Guard, Army Reserve and civilian personnel with annual funding that exceeds \$250 billion.

Previously Ford served as principal deputy then as assistant secretary of the Army for financial management and comptroller. He joined the Department of Defense in 2002 as deputy assistant secretary for health budgets and financial policy.

Before joining the Department of Defense, Ford was president and chief executive officer of a medical products firm. He was chief operating officer for Georgetown University Medical Center in the 1990's, a partner with Coopers and Lybrand during the 1980s, and first worked in government in the Office of Management and Budget and Health Care Financing Administration in the 1970's.

Ford holds a history degree from Duke University and a master's degree in education from the University of Delaware, with substantial post-graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania. He's married with three adult children, two of whom serve in the active-duty military.

Ford has served as under secretary in an acting capacity since December 2007 and was nominated formally in January.

For the latest developments on Capitol Hill, check out the AUSA website: www.ousa.org. For AUSA's electronic legislative newsletter, e-mail Bill Loper at: bloper@ousa.org.

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Military children face special circumstances.

The secretary of defense told attendees at the Military Child Education Coalition conference: “Even in peacetime, military kids also face special circumstances, such as moving every time mom or dad gets a new assignment. During their kindergarten through 12th grade years, they may attend anywhere from six to nine different schools.”

Robert Gates added, “The empty seat at the dinner table night after night is a constant reminder of a child’s worry for the safety of his or her parents. And there is also the grief and heartbreak when a loved one is injured or killed—the grim reality of war.”

Speaking at the same conference, Gen. George W. Casey Jr., Army chief of staff, said, “About half of . . . military children have had a parent deploy to either Iraq or Afghanistan. This has been challenging for our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines; and it’s been challenging for their families.”

He said those deployments were key factors in his and Army Secretary Pete Geren’s decision to begin the Army Family Covenant. He said the covenant is designed “to build an environment where families can thrive and children can grow and learn.”

Casey, who grew up in an Army family, said the Army committed \$1.7 billion to the program to ensure excellence in schools, youth services and child care. That included building more than 70 facilities, extending child care center hours and certifying workers.

For educational improvement, he said, “We believe we can best do this through partnerships and collaboration at the local, state and national level.”

Gates added, “I applaud the governors who have joined the Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity,” who have agreed to standardizing record transfers, course placement and graduation requirements.

In July, the Defense Department and Department of Education signed an agreement “to ease the strain on families as overseas units moving back home in accordance with the Base Realignment and Closure Act.” Gates said the accord will help make easier transitions for students and give military families “one less worry when moving across the country to a new post.”

Improving education in the United States goes beyond the Army and Department of Defense, Casey said. “As a nation we owe not only our military children but all of our youth the opportunity to succeed and compete in the global economy. It’s about securing America’s role as a global leader in the future and it all starts with K-12 education and the overall education experiences that our children have.”

Defense, VA working to ensure smooth transition in warrior care.

Strides made or under way to improve care for wounded warriors transitioning from Defense Department care to the Veterans Affairs system won’t be disrupted by upcoming changes in both departments’ leadership, the No. 2 VA official said.

Gordon H. Mansfield, deputy secretary of veterans affairs, said he’s confident whichever candidate wins the November elections will build on successes made to provide the best support possible for wounded troops and veterans. Mansfield spoke with American Forces Press Service during the 28th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, which wrapped up in late July in Omaha, Neb.

Citing closer DoD-VA cooperation and collaboration than ever before, Mansfield said he expects the momentum to continue as new initiatives take shape.

DoD and VA are in the process of implementing more than 400 recommendations of five major studies. The commissions and task forces were formed to examine service members’ and veterans’ health care after a February 2007 Washington Post series shed light on administrative shortfalls at Washington’s Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

A year and a half later, Mansfield said he believes both departments are on the right track, building on efforts dating back to 2002 and paving the way to a more seamless transition between their two systems. Senior non-political staff members at both departments are working to ensure these and other initiatives continue without interruption as the political changeover takes place, he said.

Meanwhile, Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has started attending meetings of the joint senior oversight committee designed to improve the two departments’ cooperation. Mansfield and Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England co-chair the committee, which includes all service secretaries and meets frequently to review progress and eliminate any roadblocks.

Mansfield said he and England have established “a very positive and open and cooperative effort” that is bearing fruit.

In a joint prepared statement submitted to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in April, the two outlined specific improvements in their two departments’ cooperation. “Specifically, we have endeavored to improve the disability evaluation system, established the Federal Recovery Coordination Program, improved data sharing between the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, developed housing facility-inspection standards, and improved delivery of pay and benefits,” they said.

DoD looks at changing command structure in Afghanistan. The Pentagon has proposed making Army Gen. David D. McKiernan overall commander of both NATO and U.S. troops in Afghanistan, a senior Pentagon spokesman told reporters Aug. 8.

“We are looking at options and ways that we can streamline the command-and-control arrangements for U.S. forces in Afghanistan,” Bryan Whitman said. The proposed change, he said, is viewed as a method to make management of U.S. forces in Afghanistan “more efficient and effective.”

“This is not a finished action; this is not a done deal by any means,” Whitman added. Senior defense officials are consulting with U.S. allies in Afghanistan, notably members of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force, he said.

McKiernan commands ISAF, which consists of about 45,000 troops, including around 15,000 U.S. troops. Another 19,000 or so U.S. troops are assigned to Combined Joint Task Force 101, which is part of Operation Enduring Freedom and commanded by Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey J. Schloesser. Regional Security Command East, which handles security and reconstruction duties in eastern Afghanistan, falls under Schloesser’s purview.

The mission of Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan, commanded by U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Robert W. Cone, is to partner with the Afghan government and the international community to train Afghan security forces.

ISAF is engaged in combating Taliban and al-Qaeda extremists and performing reconstruction projects in the southern and southeastern parts of Afghanistan. If adopted, the change would refine the U.S. command structure in Afghanistan, Whitman said.

McKiernan would assume the title of commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, Whitman said, with the four-star general commanding both ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom. However, “although it would be one commander in charge of both missions, the missions would not be blended in any way,” Whitman said. “So, you’d have the ISAF mission, and you’d have the OEF mission, and they’d remain separate and distinct.”

Whitman said the proposed command change would improve the synchronization of all U.S. forces in Afghanistan, allow the U.S. commander control of all U.S. military assets in the country, and help ensure he is deploying them to the maximum operational benefit.

For example, about 2,200 U.S. service members assigned to the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit now report to ISAF, while the 1,000 or so Marines assigned to the Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan report to U.S. Central Command.

Skelton proposes new president follow Eisenhower’s example in reviewing strategy.

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee urged the next president to follow Dwight Eisenhower’s example and create a “Solarium Project” to review strategies for the future that look beyond Afghanistan and Iraq.

Speaking July 31 at the Brookings Institution in Washington, Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., said the project was divided into three teams of advisors who promoted the merits of three different strategies with the Soviet Union.

He said in prepared remarks the members of this new project should be drawn from the military and civilian communities. “While we want ‘out of the box’ thinkers, they must be bounded by reality and rooted in the fundamentals.”

In addition, “the next president will need to ensure that any new strategy for America can truly develop across the political spectrum. Congress has a role to play [and] the general debate should involve the American people.”

Skelton said, “We must consider the effort and the sacrifices we are willing to make. We must look at the world as it is, not as we’d like it to be, and we must acknowledge that much of the world does not necessarily see us as we would see ourselves.”

He recommended that the president judge those new proposals against seven principles:

1. The first priority of the federal government is the protection of the U.S. homeland and its citizens.
2. The foundation for continued U.S. leadership is the strength of our economy and our commitment to our values and principles.
3. Do not let an outside power dominate Europe or the Western Pacific, and in addition maintain freedom of the seas.
4. U.S. world leadership should be earned by virtue of the esteem other nations hold for us, engendered by our productivity and moral leadership, and not through a self-justifying hegemony which views the peaceful rise of other nations as an inherent threat.
5. Insulate the Western Hemisphere from hostile outside powers with a collaborative approach.
6. Transnational events that can undermine states and challenge or dislocate large numbers of people—the AIDS pandemic, terrorism, and global climate change to give a few examples—should be addressed by international coalitions coordinating globally, using the full range of national power.
7. Our military strength serves as both a source of deterrence for would-be aggressors, and reassurance for our friends and allies, but military action is a last resort. When it is used—whether multilateral or unilateral—strict adherence to the essential strategic tenets propounded by Sun Tzu and Clausewitz is mandatory.