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National Defense Panel report heads to Congress

The National Defense Panel (NDP), an independent body chartered by Congress to examine the Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review and address the future defense and security needs of the United States, identified changes in military institutions, strategy and the nation's defense posture needed by the year 2020.

"Our interests will be challenged in new ways," Philip A. Odeen, the panel's chairman, said when the 94-page report was released Dec. 1. The report, entitled "Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21st Century," went to Congress on Dec. 15.

The nine-member panel of defense experts recommended:

First, the U.S. should focus its energies and resources on the challenges of tomorrow — even if that means accepting more risk in the near term.

Today's force structure — to deal with two major wars — may meet current security requirements, but it inhibits the ability to respond to new and different challenges in the long term.

Second, we must experiment — investigate new joint operational concepts, apply advanced technologies and explore different organizational structures. Information technology deserves particular emphasis.

Third, the U.S. must divest itself of the systems, processes and policies that have outlived their usefulness and divert badly needed funds to invest in the future.

Fourth, we must redirect our planning and long-term thinking to face the change and uncertainty of the early 21st century.

Fifth, the U.S. must restructure its entire national security

system as it did after World War II, and incorporate economic, political, diplomatic and military elements in an integrated system of mutual reinforcement and support.

NDP recommendations look at the future Army. The National Defense Panel did not propose a specific security or military strategy for the future, but did recommend that a "transformation strategy" be developed to guide the process of change.

Also recommended by the nine-member group was continuing experimentation, such as the Army's Force XXI, particularly jointly. Now, during a period of relative peace, NDP proposed that more resources be devoted to the development of new systems that take advantage of the ongoing revolution in military affairs.

For the Army, this means looking beyond Force XXI and accelerating the process of incorporating the concepts embodied in the Army After Next, the Army's ongoing effort to visualize the future security environment and the type of Army required.

The panel recommended the creation of a Joint Forces Command and Joint Battle Laboratory to integrate the services' modernization efforts.

President will not set deadline for Bosnia exit. President Clinton signalled Congress Dec. 18 that he would be asking for an extension of the deployment of U.S. forces in Bosnia. The deadline for leaving had been June 30.

In making the announcement, President Clinton steered clear of setting any deadline for the U.S. forces to leave the war-torn Balkans. He also did not say how many U.S. forces would remain in Bosnia. The U.S. contributes about 8,000 soldiers to the 30,000-member Stabilization Force.

Guard, Reserve would play expanded role in "homeland defense." The National Defense Panel recommends the National Guard and Army Reserve play an expanded role in defending the United States against new threats from terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction.

The nine-member panel, chartered by Congress to look to future national security needs, said the Guard and Reserve could provide a quicker and more comprehensive response to these threats.

The Guard and Reserve could train local authorities in chemical and biological weapons detections, decontamination and being prepared to assist in treating casualties.

The panel called these missions, "homeland defense" and said the Coast Guard could also play a bigger role in this area. The Defense Department issued in November its second report on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the increasing danger of terrorist attacks, such as the Aum Shinrikyo cult in the Tokyo subway system.

Additionally, the panel recommended that the reserve components take over Army missions of drug enforcement and peacekeeping in Central and South America.

NDP identifies emerging threats. Here are some of the emerging threats the National Defense Panel identified for Congress in its report on future security needs:

Attacks on U.S. commercial and defense computer and telecommunications systems as ways to undermine the economy and disrupt military operations.

Use of satellites by hostile nations or non-state actors to target U.S. forces abroad.

Direct military attacks on the U.S. homeland using weapons of mass destruction carried by cruise missiles.

Urban warfare in Third World cities, often found close to shorelines. Defense Department needs specialized weapons, closer integration with allied forces and net concepts in fighting under such conditions.

Training panel recommends separating genders in schoolhouse. The Defense advisory committee, chaired by former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum-Baker, has recommended separating male and female recruits in basic training and housing them in separate barracks.

The panel concluded that this would improve discipline and unit cohesion. Additionally, the segregation by gender would allow trainers to spend more time training recruits. Basic training would remain gender integrated in learning technical and physical skills.

The panel was created by Defense Secretary William Cohen, in part, because of increasing reports of sexual harassment and abuse cases in the military and congressional concerns over the difficulty of basic training.

Senior service officials testified in the summer and fall that each service should be allowed to continue its own manner of training recruits. The Marine Corps is the only service that does not have mixed gender basic training.

The advisory panel, whose report was released in mid-December, did recommend toughening physical training standards for male and female recruits, bringing in more female drill instructors and improving instruction on what is inappropriate behavior and what is sexual harassment.

Both the Senate Armed Services Committee and the House National Security Committee are planning to hold hearings on gender-integrated basic and advanced individual training in 1998.

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Troops will be inoculated against anthrax. The Defense Department will begin vaccinating all members of the armed forces against anthrax bacteria. This is the first time that U.S. forces will receive routine inoculations against a germ warfare threat.

The decision, announced in mid-December, was described as a "force protection issue" by Defense Secretary William Cohen. The first inoculations will be given to American forces stationed in Korea and the Persian Gulf, both regarded as high threat regions for possible chemical and biological attack. Anthrax tops the department's biological warfare threat list.

The six-dose inoculation process takes 18 months to complete and requires annual booster shots. By 2004, the department expects to have inoculated 2.4 million members on active or reserve duty and "mission-essential" civilians.

West tapped for VA post. Army Secretary Togo D. West Jr. has been named by President Clinton to head the Department of Veteran Affairs. West, who has served in the Army position since 1993, will succeed Jesse Brown, who resigned in July.

The appointment made under the federal vacancy act will allow West to take over the department Jan. 2. The law provides for such an appointment because West has already been confirmed for a federal position.

Lynn sworn in as DoD comptroller; Gansler takes over as DoD under secretary for acquisition. William J. Lynn was sworn in as Defense Department comptroller in November. He is the principal adviser to the secretary and deputy secretary of Defense for budgetary and fiscal matters. He had earlier served as director for program analysis and evaluation in the Office of Secretary of Defense. Lynn has also served as a Senate staff aide.

Jacques Gansler takes over as the principal assistant to the secretary of Defense for acquisition, research and development, logistics and communications, etc. Before his confirmation in November, he was executive vice president for TASC Inc., an applied information company in Va.

Flexibility will be needed in future combat. The Army expects the modern battlefield to more resemble a checkerboard than a chessboard where flexibility is the key to success and where "space is a key adjunct."

Gen. William Hartzog, the commanding general of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, told a special space and missile defense symposium meeting in El Paso that the Army expects to unveil its new division design in February.

"Deep, close and near are relative terms," he told the 400 attendees at the Association of the United States Army gathering. Hartzog said he expects the battlefield of 2025 to more resemble a kaleidoscope, rather than using conventional terms such as "deep," etc.

To back that change of terminology up, he was citing results from two Advanced Warfighting Experiments conducted by the Army this year and also some of the insights gained in the war games of the Army After Next.

Specifically, "logistics, the supply and sustaining systems have got to be a lot better than they are today," he said.

In the warfighting experiments, "we built a force that doesn't look like anything else." The Army found that in the Task Force XXI experiment in March in the National Training Center in particular that the "picture (received from communications satellites and sensors) was so clear that a 40-year-old's reaction was 'that can't be true' and time was lost." Additionally, the experiments and war games showed that the information system could be based in space

Summing up the lessons from the desert experiment, situational awareness is a force multiplier, 85 percent of the equipment worked better or as expected and about another 10 percent have been adapted.

Additionally, organization design worked well ("you don't need as many Apaches when you have Longbow (the advanced attack helicopter). Do you need as many tanks, armored personnel carriers, where do you put your ground sensors?") The answers to those questions mean that about 3,000 soldiers can come out of the present 18,000 in heavy armored divisions.

Quick striking task forces may be part of Army After Next. The Army After Next war games are testing a concept of using “quick striking 5,000-soldier task forces that are far more agile than what we have now and are able to sustain themselves.”

While service distinctions and pride will remain in 2025, Gen. William Hartzog, commander of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command, said the relationship “may be interdependence rather than jointness with the other services” in these operations.

Hartzog said the Army and the other services have to forge “a consensus on doctrine — that is joint and multinational in nature and interagency as well... To do that we have to get past all the discussion and budget gnawing over resources.”

Health care will be high on DoD agenda. The Department of Defense’s top civilian in charge of quality-of-life issues pledged that military health care will remain very high on the Pentagon’s agenda.

Rudy DeLeon, under secretary of Defense for personnel and readiness, told the National Military Families Association recently that “quality has got to be there” in medical care for military beneficiaries.

But “our greatest challenge is that it be accessible to everyone and there we have our work cut out for us.”

As installations close and the military continues to downsize, access has been a growing problem for many classes of beneficiaries. This is particularly acute for military retirees over 65 who are not allowed to enroll in TRICARE, DoD’s new health plan.

But even families of active duty soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines have reported problems when physicians withdraw from TRICARE, as was the case in September in Colorado.

DeLeon added, “we want to make sure we are fair to every one... and to let retirees know that the health care benefit will be there for them.”

He said the department will also study the option of offering the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program to some categories of military beneficiaries.

Two integrated divisions will be established. Army Secretary Togo D. West Jr. announced Dec. 3 a plan to establish two Active Component/Army National Guard (AC/ARNG) integrated divisions. The Army National Guard (ARNG) enhanced separate brigades and the Army installations selected as headquarters for the two integrated divisions were also announced.

This supports the earlier Army decision to stand up two AC/ARNG integrated divisions. Each division will consist of an active component division headquarters company and three ARNG enhanced separate brigades.

The first division headquarters company (main) will be at Fort Riley, Kan. with a forward element at Fort Jackson, S. C. The second division headquarters company (main) will be at Fort Carson, Colo., with a forward element at Fort Polk, La.

Each division headquarters will be commanded by an active component major general with approximately 200-plus personnel assigned. The forward element, led by a brigadier general, will consist of approximately 15-20 personnel.

The enhanced separate brigades selected as part of the first division are the 30th Mechanized Infantry Brigade of North Carolina, the 218th Mechanized Infantry Brigade of South Carolina and the 48th Mechanized Infantry Brigade of Georgia.

Those brigades selected as part of the second division include the 45th Infantry Brigade of Oklahoma, the 39th Infantry Brigade of Arkansas and the 76th Infantry Brigade of Indiana.

Smart Cards for basic trainees are being tried at Leonard Wood, Knox. “Smart cards” or (stored value cards) are being offered to basic trainees as part of a year-long pilot program at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and Fort Knox, Ky.

The cards replace cash as the way trainees’ are paid. Smart cards are the same size as credit cards and will be used to pay for personal items and on-post recreation. They have an embedded microprocessor chip that can hold a variety of information.