



FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE E-NOTES

July 2013

DEFENSE REORGANIZATION UNDER SEQUESTRATION: A Speech by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on December 1, 2016

By Frank G. Hoffman and Michael P. Noonan



Frank G. Hoffman is a Washington-based national security analyst and a member of FPRI's Board of Advisors.

Michael P. Noonan is Director of FPRI's national security program.



This "speech" by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressing the National Press Club in Washington DC on December 1, 2016 is, obviously, a work of fiction. With that having been said, the recommendations made here may very well be necessary in order to align U.S. military means to budgetary ends under the realities of sequestration and the Budget Control Act. The suggested force structure recommendations are solely those of the authors and do not represent the views of any organizations they may represent.

Guests, members of the press and media, and most importantly, my fellow Americans.....

Now that the election is over, and we're in the interregnum between the outgoing and incoming Administrations, the time has come for me to address a profound challenge facing our nation: the serious decline in the readiness of our Armed Forces. Our national security strategy, issued last year by the outgoing Administration, remains a comprehensive and accurate list of the key strategic objectives for our Nation. However, it is not rationally tied to any priorities nor to the means that the Nation is willing to tax itself to pay for. Its aspirations are beyond reach, and poorly linked to our security appropriations. Thus, a growing gap has been created between the missions that we in the Armed Forces of the United States are assigned, and those that we can actually execute. This yawning gap places our security at peril, and I am duty bound to report this simple fact to our Nation's leaders in both the Executive Branch and Congress.

As I say this, let me stress that I am also duty bound by custom and the professional ethos of our country's military to offer a possible solution to this serious and growing problem.

After coming to this assignment upon the sudden resignation of my predecessor, I have gained a steadily greater insight to why he chose to take the position of principle that he did. The Chiefs and I collectively have come to feel that the time has come for both the Executive Branch and Congress to acknowledge the harm that the inability to conclude any effective legislative agreements over the last four years has had on our Nation's defense, and to take responsibility for the steady demise of our ability to meet our strategic objectives.

We have watched with growing alarm the significant damage that sequestration is doing to the force, as recruiting declines, retention of our experienced and capable junior leaders past their basic obligation sinks toward zero,

maintenance backlogs spike, and our combat readiness is degraded. Half the Air Force's flying squadrons are not combat ready, our Fleet size is now projected to be 215 ships, and the Army has cancelled all combat exercises at the National Training Center, our premier training evolution. The Marine Corps has grounded its MV-22 fleet for lack of parts and massive readiness concerns, and the last three Marine Expeditionary Units deployed on 2 instead of 3 ships due to a collapse of naval maintenance in our amphibious fleet. None of those units were Special Operations Certified despite dire requests from the regional commanders for such training qualifications. To be completely direct: three years of political deadlock and legislative paralysis has undermined our ability to preserve our position in the world, and badly damaged our influence and our ability to defend ourselves. Frozen pay and sharply reduced benefits, cuts to force levels, reduced training and wholesale cuts in procurement and research accounts have left us poorly prepared to execute any national security strategy.

I could not in good conscience continue to sit in my office and watch the readiness and morale of the force continue to decline without taking some action. While the damage has been real, it is not irreversible. Accordingly, I have joined with my fellow Chiefs and those with significant equities in the future Joint Force and fashioned together a proposal that will better match our needs with the resources available. We believe this will ultimately give the Nation the security it must have at a reasonable cost. This proposal is a holistic one, not without significant changes in our force posture and calling for a considerable shift in missions and functions for the Services and the National Guard. Our earnest hope is that it serves as a catalyst for our nation's leaders and elected leaders who must ultimately take some responsibility and guide the Nation's security.

As a bit of a preamble, let me remind you that we have had major Roles and Missions debates in the past. Following our victory in the Second World War, a furious debate erupted between competing and duplicative viewpoints of our Service leaders at a point in time where our Nation's leaders hoped to reduce defense spending. In an effort to reduce if not eliminate the internecine fighting, Secretary of Defense Forrestal met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) at Key West, Florida, from 11-14 March 1948. In attendance were the existing Chiefs—that is, the Chairman and the Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

Out of this offsite meeting and subsequent discussions the following month in Washington came an agreement titled "Functions of the Armed Forces and the Joint Chiefs of Staff" issued on 21 April 1948. The JCS formalized its duties regarding strategic planning and direction of the armed forces, and the establishment of unified commands was formalized. The agreement also designated executive agents for certain missions and activities.

The most contentious debates, those between the Navy and Air Force over the role and scope of their respective aviation capabilities, were smoothed over. The Navy received the mission "to conduct air operations as necessary for the accomplishment of objectives in a naval campaign," while the Air Force was assigned sole responsibility for strategic air warfare. The roles and missions allocated at Key West remained in force until the Eisenhower administration issued a slightly revised version in 1954.

The original Key West agreement over Roles and Missions as revised proved to be a useful framework for post-war requirements over several decades. But with the dramatic changes in the world over that time and now under severe budgetary pressures, these roles and missions require another substantive review and adjustment. Accordingly, I decided to conduct this review at Key West once again. This time we did not require a civilian official to pull us together or broker our competing interests. Instead, I undertook the task as the senior military officer of the country, and invited not just the three largest Services, but the entire senior leadership of all our major forces. Again the Navy, Army and Air Force service chiefs joined me. Joining us were now the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Commander of Special Operations Command, the head of U.S. Cyber Command, and the Director of the National Guard Bureau.

During our deliberations it became clear that we needed to take bold steps towards Joint interdependence if we were to retain the military edge that we believe has sustained our nation's security and underwrote its foreign policy for some 70 years. This proposal does that, and it begins to create interdependencies between the Services while reducing duplication, costly overhead and wasted resources. At the spending levels we now face in our national security budget, some very hard and painful calls have to be made.

Accordingly, with a great deal of compromise in the face of severe resource constraints, we propose the following

adaptations in our defense establishment and assigned roles and missions.

Army. The U.S. Army is in dire straits, having been ridden hard in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and the intervention in Syria's civil war. Planned reductions to Army end strength from 570K at the peak of the Iraqi war to today's 475K were not well managed due to Congressional constraints. The reductions have undercut our operations in Syria obviously. Future reductions have been directed to take the Army to 390K. Such reductions cannot be made without some serious risk, and requires changes to base infrastructure and overhead. Bases including Forts Knox, Polk, and Riley will have to be closed. Civilian expertise will have to be sacrificed, and the Army's educational system revamped to cut down on students in the pipeline. In this way, we think we can afford an Army of no less than 400K. The number of Active Component Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) will also be reduced to 30 total—with forward deployed BCTs and enablers remaining outside the continental United States in Alaska, Hawaii, Germany, Italy, and South Korea. A rotational tiered readiness system will be used to maintain the maximum amount of tooth on active duty with more readily available tail in the Reserve Component for units not at peak readiness. But relying upon the Reserve Component is just one risk mitigator, and is certainly not a panacea. We have developed options to streamline the RC's management structure, increase its operational readiness and training resources, and increase the pay of the reserve. However, the Active Component of the Army remains the Nation's crucial arm of strategic decision.

Navy. We concluded that our Navy was in poor shape due to the lack of investment funding for shipbuilding. We reduced the number of carriers from 10 to 8. The risk in the reduction will be offset with the three small carriers of the America class, which will be used to employ our next generation of unmanned attack systems. The incorporation of smaller UASs into the Fleet will increase our sortie generation rates, and lower our costs. With the carrier and aviation cuts, we were able to increase the depleted attack submarines from 38 to 48 which are instrumental to our future strategy of Offshore Control. We were also able to add back three amphibious ships to the Navy's current plan of only 21. A total of 24 ships allows for a sufficient rotation base for our crisis response and forward presence. We eliminated the Littoral Combat Ship program after the production of 15 ships for mine warfare. We extensively debated the cost and benefits of the strategic ballistic submarine force. The Triad has served us well but sustaining it in its present form is unaffordable. We have determined that the value of the SSBN force in terms of deterrence against sudden strikes is too valuable. Therefore, we preserved the strategic submarines, with 8 boats and two crews per boat operating at a reduced level.

Air Force. In addition to standing down our ICBM force, we elected to make the Air Force the Executive Agent for Cyber Command and our cyber warfare capability. Additionally, the Air Force will be responsible for all Space and missile defense activity. Roles and missions associated with the missile defense agency and Space Command will be conducted by the Air Force. This will allow us to eliminate one agency and one joint headquarters. In light of fiscal reality and the cost growth experienced in the F-35 Lightning program, we adjusted the Air Force acquisition objective from 1,735 to 1,000 airframes.

Marine Corps. As part of our reorganization we wrestled with the Marine's traditional approach of combined arms and its extensive and innovative history with aviation. Reluctantly, we concluded that a separate Marine fixed-wing strike and air superiority was no longer a necessity and that the requirement for that type of aviation support for amphibious operations would be provided by the Navy. Accordingly, we propose that Marine Aviation be limited to its rotary wing assets, unmanned systems, and fixed wing platforms for command and control, logistics, and aerial refueling. All fixed-wing strike and air superiority tasks will be covered by the Navy and the Air Force. Additionally, we debated whether the Marines needed their own heavy tanks. We concluded that this capability is more appropriately a role of the U.S. Army. Accordingly we propose that the Army retain three tank battalions in the Reserve, each having a habitual relationship with specific large formations in the Marine operating forces to preserve an understanding of the employment of armor. In addition, we reversed the force reductions implemented by the last Administration that would have cut the Marines to just two divisions and eliminated our forward presence in Okinawa and Australia. Thus, we propose to retain three full active divisions and our forward presence capability, but at a reduced total active duty end strength of 150,000 Marines.

Special Operations Command. The special operations community has grown in value and size over the last decade. The valor and value of our Special Operators is unquestionable. But we must be cognizant that it is not always the right tool to fix all problems. To keep its special status, especially as the size of the conventional force shrinks, and where it gets its soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines from, we propose a decrease in its size from 68,000 to 55,000.

However, key modernization programs for aviation and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets will be increased. We also tasked the National Defense University with sourcing a world-class education system for our experts in the Human Domain.

The Reserve Component. As both a strategic and operational reserve, we must have the confidence that our Reserve Component can be accessed and rapidly employed, both at home and abroad. An increased reliance upon the RC mandates that their training and readiness be maximized. Therefore, the Guard and Reserve will merge into a single National Reserve. Units in the National Reserve will also have tiered readiness on a rotating basis. Those units maintained in the highest tier of readiness will be in Title 10 status and will be available for rapid mobilization during times of crisis. For units in this status, training time will be increased from 24 days of drill time to 36, plus the annual 2-week training event. The units maintained in the other readiness tier will be available to carry out Title 32 as well as Title 10 duties. These units will be pooled and available to the leaders of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the organized territories of the United States as natural and manmade events necessitate. Savings from the consolidation of our duplicative establishments will be retained by the Reserve Component and be assigned to a significant upgrade of reserve training installations around the country.

Management Overhead. Additionally, the bloated headquarters of our administrative bureaucracy at the Pentagon needs to be rectified. Some trimming has been done, but we've only touched the tip of an enormous iceberg of sclerotic ineptitude. We proposed the disestablishment of the three antiquated Departments, relics of the 19th century and pre-Goldwater-Nichols days. This will eliminate an entire layer of management, one that generates lots of political positions but little real value added. We estimate that this will eradicate over 5,000 senior positions and nearly a billion dollars of year in savings, with increased effectiveness for the force. Many positions with acquisition oversight can be preserved and subordinated to the Service Chief. Naturally, this will place a greater reliance on the OSD staff, aided by the Joint Staff, to ensure that the Services execute their responsibilities and manage their resources properly.

I am aware of the sensitivity of my proposal and specious claims that I might be overstepping my role or undercutting civil-military relations. I think this proposal is consistent with my role and my obligation as the senior military advisor to the President and to Congress. I took an oath to preserve and defend the Constitution and have dedicated my entire career to advancing and securing this wonderful country's values and political traditions. I take that oath very seriously, perhaps more so than our elected leaders, who have abdicated their responsibility for providing for the defense of our great land, and actively avoided any accountability for their actions. Simply stated, it is my professional obligation to offer my advice and counsel to the Nation's elected leadership and to the American people.

We did not get into our current situation overnight, and there are no simple or quick solutions that will help us climb out of the hole we are in. There is only so much capability that can be sustained at \$440B a year. The gravity of the situation must be recognized and the implications of continuing on the current path plainly understood. Our country is not in the position of muddling through without continued strategic risk of an unacceptable nature. The time for decisive action is upon us, the costs for continued decline and lack of accountability are too great. The framework established by the Chiefs and leaders at Key West better matches our aspirations with our resources and reduces the insolvency of our security.

FPRI, 1528 Walnut Street, Suite 610, Philadelphia, PA 19102-3684

For more information, contact Eli Gilman at 215-732-3774, ext. 255, email fpri@fpri.org, or visit us at www.fpri.org.