

National Security and the State Department “T Bureaus”

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“If you don’t fund the State Department fully then I need to buy more ammunition...the more that we put into the State Department’s diplomacy, hopefully, the less we have to put into a military budget....”

—General James Mattis testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 5, 2013

General Mattis might have raised a few eyebrows on Capitol Hill when he delivered the quote above, but he was simply stating what those of us at the Department of State see every day: diplomacy and development are integral parts of US national defense. And applying those tools effectively lessens the need to put at risk American men and women in uniform. The dividends for US national security are enormous.

As the Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, I oversee the “T Family” Bureaus—the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance (AVC); the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation (ISN); and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM) at the

Department of State. These Bureaus fight above their weight class when it comes to keeping America safe and every member of the team exemplifies the idea of “smart power.”

“T FAMILY” BUREAUS

Arms Control, Verification and Compliance
(AVC)

International Security and Nonproliferation
(ISN)

Political-Military Affairs
(PM)

The issues handled by the “T Family” Bureaus are cross-cutting and affect people around the world. For that reason, we cover a lot of ground, both literally and figuratively. The work we do in T informs, augments, and helps implement US security policies.

PM is the direct link between the Department of State and the Department of Defense (DOD). PM provides policy direction in the areas of international security, security assistance, military operations, defense strategy and plans, and defense trade. Its Regional Security and Arms Transfers team is working to strengthen our security partnerships with our allies and partners around the world.

From continuing efforts on counter-piracy off the coast of Somalia to countering conventional weapons proliferation, especially shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, PM is working to reduce conflicts around the globe. The Bureau is also the leading contributor to worldwide demining efforts. By combining military and political expertise, PM also helps to manage planning and logistics for dealing with the world’s hot spots.

Though less likely to grab headlines, PM also handles the essential daily work of reviewing and adjudicating export licenses, as well as ensuring the security of our most sensitive technologies. President Obama came into office strongly believing that we needed to improve the outdated export control system in order to strengthen US national security and advance US foreign policy interests. PM has run point on creating an efficient and predictable system using modern business practices and tools to help increase scrutiny on our most sensitive technologies while enabling our exporters to become more competitive now and in the future. We still have work to do, but the progress we have made is good for American national security, good for American business, and bad for those seeking to do us harm.

Probably one of the most unsung features of the Bureau is the Political Advisors (POLAD) Program. This program allows Foreign Service Officers to serve alongside military officers, including combatant commanders.

The program functioned for years with just a handful of senior State officers (mostly former ambassadors) placed at the combatant commands. While this arrangement was hugely popular at the handful of commands that enjoyed the services of these diplomats, it had very little impact on State, since most of these officers retired shortly after their POLAD assignments and were not frequently able to share the expertise they gained working with the military with their State colleagues.

As Secretaries Robert Gates and Hillary Clinton looked to strengthen State-DOD ties, one of the methods they chose was expanding the POLAD program. The goal was to add dozens of mid-level State officers to the mix, providing State Department expertise to a much larger group of DOD leaders. This would also ensure that those mid-level officers had many years ahead of them to make use of the valuable contacts they had built with the DOD during their assignments.

The most dramatic growth occurred in 2010, when 50 positions were added. Today, there are 90 POLAD positions, 31 of which are based abroad. Given the increased role our military plays overseas, whether it is operations in Afghanistan, or the establishment of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), constant, seamless coordination between our military and civilian efforts is not just nice to have; it is a “must-have.”

For AVC and ISN, the current focus is on implementing policies laid out by President Obama in Prague four years ago. In that speech, the President stated America’s intention to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. He acknowledged that this was a long-term goal—one that might not be possible in his lifetime. He rightly emphasized that every step toward that goal would help make us safer.

While every US President in the nuclear age has pursued arms control and supported nonproliferation efforts, the threats of the 21st century have made the situation more urgent. While the likelihood of a large-scale nuclear exchange has fortunately diminished through decades of cooperative, often challenging, work between Moscow and Washington, nuclear dangers have not disappeared. The threat posed by the spread of

nuclear materials and technologies remains, as does the threat that terrorists or other non-state actors could acquire a nuclear weapon. While our nuclear arsenals have little direct relevance in deterring these threats, concerted action by the United States and Russia—and indeed, from all nuclear weapon states—to further reduce their arsenals can help gain international support for strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime. A strong nonproliferation regime makes nuclear theft, unauthorized use, and proliferation harder. The ultimate solution is pretty straightforward: take away the tool—in this case nuclear material and weapons—and you mitigate the threat.

With this in mind, AVC and ISN have joined the interagency in creating, developing and implementing arms control and nonproliferation policies.

AVC's first major effort in this process was the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty or New START. The implementation of the Treaty is going very well and when New START is fully implemented, the United States and the Russian Federation will be at the lowest levels of deployed strategic nuclear warheads since the 1950s.

Now that the implementation of the New START Treaty is well underway, we are turning our attention to the next steps in nuclear reductions. This Administration is committed to continuing a step-by-step process, as outlined by the President in Prague and recently reiterated in Berlin, to reduce the overall number of nuclear weapons. AVC is leading the way on the creation of new and innovative verification measures that can be used to verify future reductions.

The Bureau continues to push for the negotiation of a ban on the production of new fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Often called the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, this agreement is a logical and absolutely essential next step in the longer term path toward further nuclear disarmament, while also reducing the possibility that fissile material could get into the hands of non-state actors.

An important item on the agenda is securing US ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and pushing for its global entry into force. The United States has not tested a nuclear weapon for more than 20 years and our scientists say we will not need to because of the confidence that our stockpile stewardship program gives in maintaining the safety, security, and effectiveness of our nuclear arsenal. It is in our interest that all other countries also forswear nuclear testing. As stated in the April 2010 US Nuclear Posture Review, "Ratification of the CTBT is central to leading other nuclear weapons states toward a world of diminished reliance on nuclear weapons, reduced nuclear competition, and eventual nuclear disarmament."

Beyond treaties, AVC is working on transparency and confidence building measures among the five recognized nuclear-weapons states (China, France, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom), in addition to working missile defense and space cooperation around the globe.

ISN covers the nonproliferation side of the equation. Specifically, the Bureau leads US efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. ISN plays a key role in the US government's efforts to prevent, curtail, and roll back the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea. This diplomatic full-court press has contributed to the unprecedented international consensus on maintaining sanctions and other pressure on both states.

Further away from the spotlight, ISN is aiding efforts to track and interdict shipments of sensitive and dual-use equipment to suspect nations. The Bureau helps foreign partners in tackling the threat of WMD terrorism. ISN helped to organize the inaugural Nuclear Security Summit in 2010. The 50 global leaders in attendance pledged to strengthen nuclear security and secure vulnerable nuclear material. The second Summit in Seoul garnered additional commitments and confirmed extensive progress on the 2010 pledges. A third Summit will take place in the Netherlands in 2014, and President Obama announced in June that the United States will host another Summit in 2016. Turning pledges into action, ISN also helps to implement this initiative.

Some nations view nonproliferation as a secondary issue compared to other economic and development priorities. We do not subscribe to such a division, but see peaceful uses of the atom and nonproliferation as part of the same equation. ISN offers capacity-building programs that are often of "dual benefit." These programs help us achieve our nonproliferation goals while also contributing to the security and development priorities of host countries. For example, ISN supports the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Peaceful Uses Initiative, an effort spearheaded by US leadership. Through that initiative, the IAEA provides direct benefits for health care through nuclear medicine; food security through new crop development and preventing environmental pests and toxins; clean drinking water through isotope hydrology; and assistance in developing the infrastructure needed for safe and secure development of nuclear power. This initiative demonstrates to developing countries how complying with a strong nonproliferation regime can directly help them.

Looking ahead, ISN will continue to focus on strengthening the global nonproliferation regime and preparations for the 2015 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference, which is an event held once every five years that allows countries to take stock of their efforts to live up to their nonproliferation and disarmament commitments under the treaty. An important goal we share with the international community is the achievement of a Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. ISN stands ready to do its part in facilitating discussions among states in the region to create conditions for a successful dialogue on such a zone.

In addition to working with Bureaus at State and agencies, departments and organizations outside the building, the "T Family" Bureaus also coordinate closely with each other. An urgent current issue: all three Bureaus are involved in contingency planning related to Syria and Syrian chemical and advanced conventional weapons.

As is clear, the work of these Bureaus, and the work of State as a whole, plays a significant role in protecting US national security. Of course, all of the work described here is but a sampling of what the “T Family” does each and every day in order to build a strong, balanced approach to foreign policy. Our work to help blend development and diplomacy with our defense capabilities will help this nation meet the challenges of the 21st century.