
THE U.S. MILITARY: A GLOBAL VIEW OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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One hundred years ago, those involved in the nation's national security business wrestled with many of the same, or certainly similar, issues that we face today, says General Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "Then and now, regional powers can threaten the nation's interest in distant conflict. Then, as now, internal strife from religious hatreds, ethnic rivalry, tribal conflicts, can, and often does, lead to bloodletting. And then and now, U.S. troops often play a role in the crisis to restore peace." This article is based on remarks made by General Myers at a recent event at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

Let's look back at September, when the nation was shocked by an extremist's attack. In the aftermath, the president declared that the extremist struck at the "very heart of the American republic." And as happens after events like that, of course Wall Street took a dive. Certainly the motivation for that attack in part came from how others perceived America and our role in the world. For example, the Philippines was caught up in a conflict between their Muslim and Catholic communities. And U.S. forces were there to help.

Now, some may think I am talking about September 2001. Actually I was referring to September of 1901. The point is that there are parallels over time.

A hundred years ago, the extremist attack that I was referring to was done by an anarchist who hated America and all it stood for. He took out his wrath by assassinating President William McKinley. Today, of course, we probably wouldn't call him an anarchist — he'd be an extremist or perhaps a terrorist. It was also a hundred years ago that the nation debated America's Manifest Destiny, as it brought in new territories of Wake and Guam and Hawaii and they all came under the American flag. Of course, the parallel today is the debate over the part the United States will play in globalization.

In 1901, the U.S. armed forces had to adapt to meet the new challenges. President Teddy Roosevelt

championed many of the efforts that today we would call transformation. The U.S. Navy was ranked fourth or fifth in the world. In the Atlantic, the German Navy had 12 battleships to the U.S.'s eight. And to fix this, Roosevelt built 24 new capital ships. This fleet was called "the Great White Fleet" that set sail in 1907. The Army underwent similar changes when they went to the Enfield rifle. They also purchased new bayonets because the old ones would bend in hand-to-hand combat.

But it's not the hardware change that makes such efforts transformational; it is the intellectual and organizational changes. Roosevelt's Secretary of War, Elihu Root, created the [National] War College at Fort McNair in order to give military officers the mental agility to anticipate events in this new international environment. He also set up the army staff, so that the army could have a cadre of planning experts on hand. This ensured that the army had the flexibility to meet the new challenges of going from strictly a U.S.-based force to one that would have worldwide interests.

My point is that 100 years ago, those involved in our nation's national security business wrestled with many of the same, or certainly similar, issues that we face today. Then and now, regional powers can threaten the nation's interest in distant conflict. Then, as now, internal strife from religious hatreds, ethnic rivalry, tribal conflicts, can, and often does, lead to

bloodletting. And then and now, U.S. troops often play a role in the crisis to restore peace.

But compared to 100 years ago, our 21st century security environment has, I think, two profound changes that makes it different. First is the presence of transnational actors. They find sanctuary by design within the borders of hostile states. Or they find sanctuary by default within the borders of failing states or in ungoverned areas.

The second profound change is that belligerents of all types have access to dramatically more sophisticated tools. It's probably an outgrowth of our great global telecommunications industry that gives hostile states and terrorists alike access to a treasure of information. The post-Cold War arms markets offer them many different types of weapons — advanced radars, sophisticated submarines, and so forth. Unfortunately, these markets also include weapons of mass destruction: chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and the know-how to make them and use them. And this proliferation of advanced technology accentuates a trend in warfare that has a potentially profound impact on our security.

Since the time of Thucydides, the premise of conflict between nations is that the stronger states could defeat the weaker ones. That was the common wisdom. In the past 200 years, that's been roughly true about 70 percent of the time. But as we saw in Vietnam, and the Soviets saw in Afghanistan, great powers can fail because there's a mismatch in interest. What is a peripheral issue to a powerful state may be a core issue of survival to a weaker state. This disparity of interest, then, can get translated into a disparity of commitment. It's one reason why a weak power can overcome a stronger nation's designs.

And since 1980, one political scientist reports that this trend for the weaker to succeed has actually increased as the weaker states have come out on top almost half of the time in the last 20 years.

And now if you add weapons of mass destruction to the equation, you have a case where relatively weak actors may have access to lethal power that rivals

what the strongest nations have. Weak actors can potentially inflict unprecedented devastation on a great nation. With weapons of mass destruction, they can hold at risk large portions of societies.

During the Cold War, we faced the threat of nuclear conflict with a superpower, but deterrence contained that threat because we placed at risk something the adversary held very dear. That was, in essence, their very existence. Today, if a weak power is a terrorist network with weapons of mass destruction, deterrence won't work most of the time. When they're willing to commit suicide to further their agenda, what do they value that we can place at risk?

This dilemma reflects the unprecedented nature of today's security environment. And to meet these very daunting challenges, the president recently published a new National Security Strategy. In support of that, let me tell you about three broad considerations of the military's role in supporting our new national security strategy.

The first consideration is that the United States military has got to accomplish a multitude of tasks. We must promote security, of course, to fight and win our nation's wars. But nothing is more central to our mission today than to defend this nation here at home. And that's why we've made a series of very significant changes to the way the President tells us how to go about our business. We call that the Unified Command Plan. It's how the president says, "Here's what I want your various commands to do."

One of the central things we've done is establish U.S. Northern Command. It stood up on October 1, 2002, so it's a little over a month old. And to say it knows exactly where it's going would be a mistake. It's got about a year before it gets up to what we think would be its full operational capability. We gave it the mission to deter, prevent, and defeat aggression aimed at the United States. And should the necessity arise, from an act of war or an act of God, Northern Command will provide the talents and the skills of our armed forces to assist and, in most cases, be subordinate to civilian authorities for whatever the crisis of the moment is.

Key to Northern Command's effectiveness in carrying out the mission that I described is the flow of information. This applies to not just inside the Department of Defense, and not just inside this new Northern Command, but to all the Federal departments and agencies that have something to do with keeping us safe.

In our new security environment, we know that everybody has a role — State, Treasury, Justice, Customs, intelligence agencies, the FBI and, I think, all the way down to local law enforcement agencies and departments.

Recently, I was fortunate enough to see a program that we're experimenting with and that we hope to bring to fruition fairly quickly. It's the project we call Protect America and it sounds simple. It involves integrating techniques in a way that has not been done, at least inside the government. It's a web-based collaborative and interactive tool that offers a lot of promise in integrating data from different people and allowing people to interact with that data. It's structured in a way that allows hands-off gathering of data until it becomes important to you.

These kinds of tools are absolutely essential if we're going to come up with the agility and the flexibility to deal with the terrorist threat that we see today. What they're going to enable us to do is to think faster than our adversary. And I would submit that early on in Afghanistan we were absolutely thinking faster than the adversary, and therefore we were very successful. I think you could make an argument now that we're not thinking as fast as we need to think, that we're not inside the decision loop, if you will, of the adversary. We need to speed that up.

Another complex factor is that it's not just inside the United States that this information flow has to work very well. We've all got to be able to interact, at least in an informational way, certainly, with a common foundation, if we're going to be effective against this terrorist threat.

I see our new Northern Command as the catalyst to help the rest of government develop these information-sharing techniques — from a cop on a

beat somewhere who notices something interesting and unusual going on, to the Coast Guard which tracks shipping coming into our ports, to individuals who just want to call up and make a report. You're going to have to have some way to manage it in order to avoid completely inundating the law enforcement network, and that's what I'm suggesting. These are tasks that we've got to do today.

At the same time, we've got to ensure our military is ready for tomorrow. And it's not something that we can do tomorrow, it's something we've got to do today for tomorrow. So we made some other changes to our Unified Command Plan. We have a command in Norfolk, Virginia, called Joint Forces Command, and we've given them a primary job now of transforming our military in terms of our exercises and experimentation. And we removed one of the hats that this command used to have — and that was the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, which was a NATO command. We've done it with some controversy, but we've done it. And the way it will probably wind up is that that command in Norfolk will also have a NATO hat that will work transformation and the interoperability of the United States and European nations. This is still in the proposal stage, but that's probably the way it's going to work out.

The second consideration is our military's role in this, the 21st century, and geography. The question you might ask is: Should the military be focused regionally or should we focus more globally? My unequivocal answer is yes. On the one hand, we've got to focus regionally because so often that's where the interests are. That's where we've got to maintain a local capability. The regional combatant commanders — the Pacific Command, the European, the Central Command, the Southern Command — they're out there to promote stability, to foster good military cooperation between forces, and to provide that immediate crisis response force — from humanitarian up to conflict.

On the other hand, we know that there are certain threats that transcend regional and political borders. So our response must transcend those borders as well. And that means that we've also got to have a global

capability that's equal to our regional capability, which we don't have today in most respects. This is something that's going to be evolving.

We did stand up a new U.S. Strategic Command in Omaha. We've always had a Strategic Command in Omaha, but what we did is give it a dramatically new mission by closing down what's known as U.S. Space Command in Colorado Springs and putting the two together with a brand-new command. We're also looking at giving the command new missions that weren't assigned before.

These missions, I think, reflect the kinds of global capabilities that we need, things like missile defense. There is a need to look at such issues as global strike, information operations, and command and control, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance on a global basis, not just regionally.

Let me explain the missile defense issue to you. Hypothetical situation: A missile is launched from Iraq into Israel. Iraq happens to be in one of our regional commands called Central Command. Israel happens to be in European Command. So immediately we have two commands involved, and perhaps Strategic Command.

Those kinds of events are inherently multi-command and more global in nature than they are regional. So to do the job right, we've got to have a global approach to how we integrate our missile warning, our command and control, the defensive options that we have, and the attack options, for that matter, that we have. And we need one commander that looks at this holistically on a global basis.

So those are a couple of examples that explain what we're talking about in developing a more global view of the world. And it particularly has applicability when you think about dealing with terrorists because they're not respecting any boundaries. They go back and forth very, very easily.

The third role is an issue that's been talked about a lot lately. It's in the national security strategy, and the military has a role. It's the issue of preemption. At

times, and especially if you pay attention to a lot of the articles that have been written, you wonder if folks have really read the national security strategy.

Because if you do, you'll realize that the national security strategy really describes using all instruments of national power to prevent an attack. It describes how preemption must include strengthening our non-proliferation efforts, to use diplomatic and financial tools to keep weapons of mass destruction technology out of the wrong people's hands. And it talks about ensuring our military forces are well-equipped to deal with the weapons of mass destruction environment. It would cause any belligerent who would want to use weapons of mass destruction to pause to think if they might be able to gain their desired effect. It clearly states that preemption doesn't have to include the use of offensive military force at all.

I would submit that this concept isn't really new to Americans. In fact, it was President Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) who talked about it in the days before Pearl Harbor, before the U.S. was involved in World War II. It was during a fireside chat on September 11, 1941, where FDR talked about a Nazi sub that had attacked the destroyer USS GREER near Iceland. He told America, "Let us not say: We will only defend ourselves if the torpedo succeeds in hitting home or if the crew and the passengers are drowned. The time for active defense is now."

In addition, international law for a long time has recognized exactly what FDR described. A nation does not need to wait for attack before it acts. In FDR's time, absorbing the unprovoked torpedo attack cost a couple of hundred lives of sailors and civilians. It certainly was a tragedy. But today absorbing a first blow of a chemical, or a biological, or a nuclear attack, radiological attack, could cost up to tens of thousands, perhaps more, of innocent lives. That would be a catastrophe. So the questions we've got to debate are: Can, or should we accept this risk? And in today's dramatically different era, must a free people wait until the threat is physically present before you act? Or can you act if there is some sort of mix of latent potential and demonstrated motive

that you don't think you're going to be able to deter? Having an open discussion about these sorts of things is, I think, very, very important and very, very healthy.

In my view, any discussion we have in the future almost has to include weapons of mass destruction and the dramatic change they've brought to our security environment. If terrorists or hostile regional powers have them, they can hold at risk our society

and certainly the societies of our friends and allies.

To help counter the threat, our Armed Forces are increasing our ability to operate in a coherent and in a global manner. We've got to have that global view and put this competency on a par with our regional capabilities. And we've got to talk about risk — the risk of action and, of course, the risk of inaction, and when the U.S. should act in its own defense. ●