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By John P. Caves, Jr.

Coming from the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), I probably will not surprise you by talking about the WMD aspects of this year's Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). Specifically, I will focus on its countering WMD aspects—that is, how the Department of Defense (DOD) thinks about and prepares to prevent, defend against, and mitigate the consequences of adversary use of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. I will not discuss the review's missile defense or nuclear deterrence aspects, but my fellow panelists may do so.

Early last year, the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction assessed the U.S. Government's preparedness to prevent and manage major WMD events.[1] We found that the government, including the Defense Department, had made considerable progress over the last decade in preparing to deal with discrete or small-scale WMD incidents, but that it lacked both the quantity of specialized assets and the quality of planning and coordination mechanisms to deal effectively with large-scale WMD contingences. We also found a need to invest more in anticipating, understanding, and countering new and emerging forms of chemical and biological threats.

I have assessed this year's QDR in part on how it addresses these shortcomings. I also have assessed it in relation to the 2006 QDR to identify areas of change and continuity across two different administrations.

Overall, this year's QDR promises significant progress by the Defense Department in addressing those aforementioned shortcomings of quantity and quality, mainly with regard to WMD elimination and consequence management. But it does not discuss how to rectify broader planning and coordination issues across the Department and with the interagency community. It does accord more emphasis than its predecessor to nontraditional chemical threat agents, while it builds on earlier efforts to improve biodefense. Altogether, I found far more continuity than change between the 2010 and 2006 QDRs.

WMD continues to be identified as one of the principal threats to U.S. and international security. The 2006 QDR identified "preventing the proliferation and use of WMD" as one of four priority objectives for "operationalizing the force." This year's QDR identifies "prevent[ing] proliferation and counter[ing] WMD" as one of its six key missions for "rebalancing the force." The WMD threat of

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particular concern for this year's QDR is the potential loss of control of WMD within fragile WMD-armed states.

WMD also features prominently in the first-listed of the 2010 QDR's key missions for rebalancing the force, which is to "Defend the United States and Support Civil Authorities at Home." Two of the four specific initiatives identified under this key mission concern WMD. One is to improve the responsiveness and flexibility of consequence management forces, and the other is to develop radiological standoff detection capabilities. With regard to the first, DOD specifically intends to restructure the one existing Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High Explosive Consequence Management Response Force, otherwise known as CCMRF, to enable more rapid response. It also intends to replace the *planned* second and third CCMRFs with smaller units focused on providing command and control for follow-on Title 10 forces, and to draw on existing National Guard forces to build a Homeland Response Force for each of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's 10 regions.

The Department developed and launched the CCMRF initiative under the last administration as one of a package of measures to strengthen its ability to respond to CBRNE incidents at home. Three CCMRF units would constitute a robust augmentation to the limited capabilities of earlier established DOD consequence management units, like each state's WMD Civil Support Team. This year's QDR importantly communicates the current defense leadership's commitment to complete and augment the fielding of new consequence management units while applying new insights on how to structure them for greater responsiveness and flexibility.

The other mission area for which the 2010 QDR announces a significant force structure change is WMD elimination. The new QDR indicates that the Department will establish a *standing* Joint Task Force Elimination Headquarters. As in the consequence management area, this year's QDR is building here on its predecessor's foundation. The 2006 QDR said that the U.S. Army's 20th Support Command–CBRNE would be expanded to enable it to serve as a joint task force capable of rapid deployment to command and control WMD elimination missions. This was manifested in 2007 as the Joint Elimination Concept Element, or JECE.

On a day-to-day basis, the JECE conducts and supports planning, maintains situational awareness, and plans for and participates in training and exercises for WMD elimination, but is not itself a joint task force headquarters. Only when directed by the National Command Authority, presumably in response to a building WMD crisis, would the JECE combine with significant parts of the 20th Support Command and other units to form such a command.

The existing construct's principal limitation is that it could take too long to pull together the joint task force to deal with what could be a quickly unfolding crisis, where the ability to deploy operational forces rapidly in execution of an informed and coherent plan could mean the difference between success and failure. Establishing a *standing* Joint Task Force Headquarters should facilitate a more rapid execution of what one would hope to be more robust plans. The devil will be in the details, though, particularly where to find the additional bodies across the Services to man a standing headquarters that is substantially more robust than the existing JECE.

Though not indicated in the QDR itself, I understand that the Department also is considering establishing additional nuclear disablement teams to bolster U.S. WMD elimination forces.

An area accorded greater emphasis in this year's QDR than in its predecessor is WMD threat reduction. The QDR highlights two threat reduction initiatives, one for nuclear and one for biological threats. In support of the President's Global Lockdown Initiative to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials within 4 years, the QDR indicates that DOD is working with interagency partners to identify countries that could benefit from site upgrades, security training facilities, and the disposition of weapons-grade materials. The fiscal year (FY) 2011 DOD budget includes $74.5 million for this initiative. The QDR also indicates that DOD will expand its biological threat reduction program to countries outside the former Soviet Union to create a global network for surveillance and response.

This year's QDR also accords more emphasis to nontraditional threat agents (NTAs), an emerging threat area fueled by technological advances and proliferation. While the 2006 QDR acknowledged NTAs among a number of emerging WMD threats, the 2010 QDR lists research on NTA countermeasures and defense as one of six specific initiatives under its Prevent Proliferation and Counter WMD mission area. I anticipate an increase in funding for this

area, but it is still a small part of the Department's overall Chemical and Biological Defense Program. In recent years, this program received substantial funding increases for research and development of broad spectrum medical countermeasures against genetically engineered and naturally mutating biological pathogens. That continuing investment and the increased emphasis on NTAs reflect welcome attention by the Department to understanding and countering emerging chemical and biological threats.

Nuclear forensics is a new area of emphasis in this year's QDR, although the Department has been working to reconstitute and improve its nuclear forensics capabilities since the 1990s. Additional resources are to be provided to enhance DOD ability to collect air and ground samples following a nuclear detonation. New platforms for conducting radiological air and ground samplings are being examined. The goal is to reduce the time that it takes to collect high quality air and ground samples at the detonation site and deliver them to nuclear forensics laboratories. This is important because technical nuclear forensics today is the long pole in the tent in terms of how long it may take for experts to integrate nuclear forensics, intelligence, and law enforcement information to provide policymakers with high reliability attribution assessments. Delay confronts policymakers with the need to make time-urgent and high consequence decisions about response on the basis of highly uncertain information.

Speeding up the actual laboratory assessment process is more challenging than shortening sample collection and delivery times, and may require new scientific and technological approaches. Per the QDR, additional resources will be provided to augment laboratory assessment capabilities. Additionally, the substantial funding increase for modernizing the ageing U.S. nuclear weapons enterprise that is included in the President's FY11 budget request for the National Nuclear Security Administration will also benefit U.S. nuclear forensics capabilities since they draw on the same infrastructure and human capital.

Developing new verification technologies to support a robust arms control, nonproliferation, and counterproliferation agenda is the final initiative listed in this year's QDR under the Prevent Proliferation and Counter WMD key mission area. I understand this primarily relates to ensuring adequate verification for the anticipated START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) follow-on agreement and what additional arms control agreements may follow.

On WMD intelligence, this year's QDR says only that it intends to refocus requirements in this area. The 2006 QDR elaborated on the inherent difficulty of collecting against adversary WMD programs and highlighted the importance of achieving a better understanding of adversary intentions and motivations. I expect those observations continue to inform the Department's approach to WMD intelligence.

This year's QDR, like its predecessor, does emphasize the importance of interagency coordination to safeguarding national security. I think it is fair to observe that effective *intra*-departmental coordination is a prerequisite for the Department's effective coordination of its counter-WMD efforts with other agencies. The 2006 QDR touted the Secretary's assignment to the commander of U.S. Strategic Command of the mission of integrating and synchronizing the Department's combating WMD efforts as a major step toward improving intra- and inter-departmental coordination. And while it has proved an important step forward, U.S. Strategic Command's mandate to integrate and synchronize translated into less capacity to guide and direct WMD developments within and outside the Department than those terms suggest.

This situation reflects, in part, a collective inability to achieve a commonly accepted understanding of what was meant by "integrate and synchronize," which itself may have been symptomatic of regional combatant commands' reluctance to cede a measure of control over operational planning and execution to a functional combatant command. It may have been unrealistic to expect that any command, at least one lacking the dedicated forces and special authorities of U.S. Special Operations Command, could exercise this kind of leadership over other commands. The 2008 Unified Command Plan scaled back Strategic Command's combating WMD mission to synchronizing planning and advocating for requirements. While this recognized the original mission's limitations, it did not address the continuing need for greater unity of effort across the broad range of DOD counter-WMD efforts.

The 2010 QDR does not address this void, but there nonetheless is cause for optimism. The 2009 consolidation of most DOD WMD policy functions under the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Strategic Affairs may provide

a stronger organizational foundation to promote improved unity of effort not only within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) but also across DOD and in its interactions with other agencies. A more focused OSD policy organization, working with its Joint Staff counterparts, may be able to integrate the various geographic and functional combatant commands' efforts on countering WMD more effectively than U.S. Strategic Command could do on its own or with the support of a less focused OSD. Moreover, OSD recently has directed a number of exercises and analyses around a major WMD challenge to shed additional light on the obstacles to achieving a more integrated DOD and interagency response and to identify the requisite remedies.

Finally, the 2010 QDR, again like its 2006 predecessor, also emphasizes the importance of international cooperation to U.S. and international security, but less explicitly than its predecessor with regard to WMD matters. The 2006 QDR in particular highlighted the 2003 creation of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) as a multinational effort to interdict WMD proliferation-related shipments. PSI is widely viewed as a major international cooperation success story, and DOD was largely responsible for that success. President Obama recognized PSI's importance in his April 2009 Prague speech when he called upon the international community to turn it into a durable international institution.

It is surprising, therefore, that the only mention of PSI in the 2010 QDR occurs in the caption of one picture. It also is not evident that the current administration's defense team has sustained its predecessor's attention to PSI. This should not be a reflection of a reduced appreciation for interdiction as a means to counter WMD challenges; the 2010 QDR calls for strengthening interdiction operations. It is more likely that the current administration's defense team has been preoccupied with completing its major reviews and in pursuing the administration's signature *new* security initiatives. If that is the case, then presumably and hopefully they will get back to revitalizing and institutionalizing PSI as it is an important part of an effective international engagement strategy for countering WMD threats.

In sum, the 2010 QDR is a positive document for countering WMD. It continues to recognize the seriousness of the threat, both as it exists today and as it is evolving in the future, and it describes a number of new initiatives that should strengthen the Nation's ability to prevent and manage major WMD contingencies. It could have said more about how the Department will improve the quality of the mechanisms for coordinating the planning and execution of counter-WMD operations overall, both across the Department and with interagency partners. It also could have offered more on how it will strengthen international cooperation for countering WMD.

We need to pay attention to how the Department follows through on the initiatives it announced and on addressing the few challenges that it did not elaborate in this document. As a colleague of mine previewed this year's QDR, he stated that it will either go far toward closing a longstanding gap between the rhetoric and reality of DOD investment in countering WMD, or it will dramatically widen it. I hope for the former.

Note

[1] Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, *Are We Prepared? Four WMD Crises That Could Transform U.S. Security* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2009).

The mission of the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction is to prepare U.S. national security leaders to address the challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction through its education, research, and outreach programs.

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