

The commission predicts a direct attack on the United States.

Hart–Rudman Calls for Homeland Defense

THE warning was nothing if not blunt. “A direct attack against American citizens on American soil is likely over the next quarter century. The risk is not only death and destruction but also a demoralization that could undermine US global leadership.”

Moreover, “in the face of this threat, our nation has no coherent or integrated governmental structures.”

The act of guarding US territory from foreign depredations should be made “the primary national security mission of the United States.” Preventing or deterring attacks against US soil or responding to them if preventive measures fail will require a comprehensive strategy and new government structures.

Such was the principal conclusion of the US Commission on National Security/21st Century, better known as the Hart–Rudman Commission after co-chairmen Gary Hart, a former Democratic Senator from Colorado, and Warren Rudman, a former Republican Senator from New Hampshire. The panel was chartered in 1998 by Defense Secretary William S. Cohen. It has now reported to both Cohen and to President Bush’s Pentagon leader, Donald H. Rumsfeld.

In late January, the group issued its third and final report. The commission released its Phase 1 and Phase 2 reports in September 1999 and April 2000, respectively, setting out a threat environment over the next 25 years and outlining what the panel viewed as a realistic new national security strategy.

The Phase 3 document called for dramatic changes to the US national security apparatus itself, including a proposal to create a new homeland security agency. Titled “Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change,” the report built upon the group’s previous work and raised stark concerns about US vulnerability.

The Focal Point

One striking recommendation: Convert the Federal Emergency Management Agency into a “National Home-

By Keith J. Costa

land Security Agency.” The new agency would be chartered in law to provide a focal point for government response in “all natural and man-made crisis and emergency planning scenarios.”

The NNSA director would enjoy Cabinet rank, undergo Senate confirmation, and serve as an advisor to the National Security Council—as is the case today with the director of central intelligence. The panel believes the proposed structure would ensure that one person is accountable to the President for homeland defense policy-making and implementation.

The NSC, though, would still play a role in planning and coordinating homeland security missions involving other federal agencies like the Defense Department, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

“Through the commission’s proposal for a National Homeland Security Agency, the US government will be able to improve the planning and coordination of federal support to state and local agencies, to rationalize the allocation of resources, to enhance readiness in order to prevent attacks, and to facilitate recovery if prevention fails,” the report stated.

“Most important,” it added, “this proposal [places] the problem of homeland security within the broader framework of US national security strategy. ... We are mindful that erecting the operational side of this strategy will take time.”

The report said NNSA’s planning and coordination activities would be carried out by three components:

- Directorate of Prevention, to oversee border-security activities.
- Directorate of Critical Infrastructure Protection, to head up the agency’s cyber-security operations.
- Directorate of Emergency Preparedness and Response, to set training and hardware standards, give resource grants, and promote information sharing by DOD, FBI, and state officials.

The new agency would also feature a National Crisis Action Center, led by a two-star National Guard general, responsible for coordinating the federal response to crises.

The commission said the NNSA structure, consolidating today’s disparate homeland security activities, would focus the government’s attention on preventing terrorist attacks against American citizens and critical infrastructure. Prevention activities would include a commitment to verifiable arms control and nonproliferation and establishing “vigilant systems of border security and surveillance” carried out by the Border Patrol, Customs Service, and Coast Guard, all three of which would become NNSA components.

An increased number of people and a rising volume of trade crossing US borders means it will be necessary to develop “new transportation security procedures and practices designed to reduce the risk that importers, exporters, freight forwarders, and transportation carriers will serve as the unwitting conduits for criminal or terrorist activities,” the report said.

Enhanced homeland security requires better intelligence gathering and sharing throughout the government so that high-risk shipments and individuals can be targeted for inspection by border-control agencies. Further, those border-patrol officials should have greater author-

ity to apprehend terrorists and stop shipments before they reach the United States, according to the commission.

Pay Attention

All signs are that the Pentagon will play a vital role in responding to a terrorist attack on US soil using Weapons of Mass Destruction, the report said. The Defense Department itself “should pay far more attention” to homeland security, and it should be reorganized to better support the overall mission.

The report noted that, at present, the department assigns responsibility for WMD incidents to the assistant to the secretary of defense for civil support while the Army’s director of military support responds to non-WMD contingencies. The commission didn’t like that setup. “Such an arrangement does not provide clear lines of authority and responsibility or ensure political accountability,” the commission concluded.

The panel recommended that the President ask Congress to establish within the Office of the Secretary of Defense the post of assistant secretary of defense for homeland security. This official would have powers to oversee the department’s homeland security activities and make sure “mechanisms are in place for coordinating military support in major emergencies.”

The new assistant secretary would report directly to the Defense Secretary. “He or she would work to integrate homeland security into Defense Department planning and ensure that adequate resources are forthcoming,” the report added.

To that end, the committee recommended that the new assistant secretary work closely with Joint Forces Command to enhance the capabilities of the Joint Task Force for Civil Support.

The task force should be headed by a senior National Guard general and given additional headquarters personnel, the report said. Furthermore, the task force should “contain several rapid reaction forces, composed largely of rapidly mobilizable National Guard units” with adequate command-and-control capabilities for handling multiple emergencies, it said.

The report acknowledges the role strong nuclear and conventional forces can play in deterring attacks against the homeland, but it added that those forces may not deter nonstate actors that wish to strike the United States.

Taking into consideration the continuing proliferation of missile technology, the commissioners argued that a ballistic missile defense system would be a valuable addition to defense capabilities and should be developed “to the extent technically feasible, fiscally prudent, and politically sustainable.”

The report called for defenses to protect the homeland from cruise missile attack.

Going to the Guard

The Hart–Rudman panel placed heavy emphasis on the role the National Guard can play in homeland security missions. Indeed, one of the Phase 3 report’s top recommendations called on the President and Secretary of Defense to make homeland security a primary mission of the Guard.

“The commission recommends that the National Guard be directed to fulfill its historic and constitutional

Commission Members

Co-Chairmen

Gary Hart, former Senator (D-Colo.).
Warren Rudman, former Senator (R-N.H.).

Commissioners

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House (R-Ga.).

James R. Schlesinger, former defense secretary, energy secretary, and director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Retired Adm. Harry D. Train II, former commander in chief, US Atlantic Command.

Retired Army Gen. John R. Galvin, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

Andrew Young, former US ambassador to the United Nations.

Anne Armstrong, former counselor to Presidents Nixon and Ford and former US ambassador to Britain.

Norman R. Augustine, former chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin.

John Dancy, former NBC News White House, Congressional, and diplomatic correspondent.

Leslie H. Gelb, former State Department director of politico-military affairs; president of Council on Foreign Relations.

Lee Hamilton, former chairman (D-Ind.) of the House Intelligence Committee; director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Lionel H. Omer, former undersecretary of commerce for international trade.

Donald B. Rice, former Secretary of the Air Force.

mission of homeland security,” it said. Presently, the Guard is mainly structured to support overseas military operations. The panel proposed that the Guard redistribute its resources “to provide greater support to civil authorities in preparing for and responding to disasters, especially emergencies involving Weapons of Mass Destruction.”

Subsequently, the Guard would take on missions such as initiating local, state, and regional planning for responding to a WMD attack and training first responders. Furthermore, the Guard should take advantage of experience it gains from crisis-response activities to develop an “overseas capability for international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief,” the report said.

The redistribution of Guard resources should only come after “a detailed assessment of force requirements” for Major Theater Wars and homeland security operations. This assessment should be conducted by DOD with the active participation of state governors and the NHSA director, the report said.

Two-War Concerns

As in the group’s Phase 2 report, the commission’s final study addresses problems with DOD’s force planning methods and takes aim at the Pentagon’s present strategy of sizing forces to fight and win two overlapping Major Theater Wars.

In its Phase 2 report, the commission expressed concern that the two-Major Theater War strategy inhibits DOD reform efforts and prevents the military from deploying the five kinds of forces—namely, strategic nuclear,

homeland security, conventional, expeditionary, and humanitarian/constabulary forces—needed in the post-Cold War world to deal with symmetrical and asymmetrical threats.

The panel maintains that the possibility of two such conflicts erupting in the same time frame is “remote” and is not supported by “actual intelligence estimates nor by this commission’s view of the likely future,” the Phase 3 report said. “We believe it is more useful to plan and retain readiness for a major conflict, while also securing the homeland and responding to small- or medium-scale conflicts, international terrorism, peacekeeping, humanitarian actions, and other commitments requiring US military support.”

With that in mind, the commission called for a new top-down planning process that would accelerate efforts to transform the military’s capabilities as recommended, with the highest priority reserved for developing DOD expeditionary forces.

Commissioners did not offer suggestions on the numbers and types of divisions, wings, and naval battle groups to carry out alternatives to the two-MTW strategy. Instead, the group focused attention on how to alter processes that for years have led defense officials to conclude that it needs to shape its forces according to the two-MTW yardstick.

The Phase 3 report said, “The Secretary of Defense should direct the DOD to shift from the threat-based force sizing process to one which measures requirements against recent operational activity trends, actual intelligence estimates of potential adversaries’ capabilities, and national security objectives as defined in the new Administration’s national security strategy”—once formulated.

As part of the Secretary’s attempts to forge a mechanism for sizing forces, the Defense Secretary “should revise the current categories of Major Force Programs used in the defense program review to focus on providing a different mix of military capabilities.” Those categories should correspond to the five kinds of forces endorsed by the commission, the report said.

Emphasizing Space

In addition to policies that affect military force structure, the report gives special attention to DOD space policy.

“There is no more critical dimension of defense policy than to guarantee US commercial and military access to outer space,” the report said. “The US economy and military are vitally dependent on communications that rely on space. The clear imperative for the new era is a comprehensive national policy toward space and a coherent governmental machinery to carry it out.”

The commission called for establishing an Interagency Working Group on Space at the National Security Council to coordinate the nation’s space policy. The working group would comprise representatives from the Commerce, State, and Defense departments, Intelligence Community, and NASA, among others. ■

Keith J. Costa is chief editor of “Inside the Pentagon,” a Washington, D.C.-based defense newsletter. His most recent article for Air Force Magazine, “Toward a ‘Concert for Freedom,’ ” appeared in the April 2000 issue.