



Reforming the National Security Council for the 21st Century: Integrating Homeland Security and Transnational Threats

The challenges of the 21st century are increasingly unconventional and transnational, and therefore demand a response that effectively integrates all aspects of American power.

President Barack Obama, The White House, 26 May 2009

Introduction

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11) exposed a disturbing weakness in the security of the American homeland. For more than 200 years, the United States had prepared itself to defend against foreign invasion, nuclear attack and other external threats. Minimal thought was given to the ability of non-state actors to infiltrate highly-trained sleeper cells into the American homeland and with little or no warning inflict massive casualties and damage through a catastrophic terrorist attack. Earlier incidents, such as the 1994 World Trade Center bombing, were treated as little more than nuisances and considered the domain of the FBI and local law enforcement. However, in the years after 9/11, the U.S. government has undertaken many significant changes to ensure that similar attacks would not occur. In May 2009, the White House announced the absorption of the Homeland Security Council (HSC) into the National Security Council (NSC) as part of a larger reorganization of the presidential national security policymaking apparatus, thereby including homeland security in a more expansive and integrated definition of U.S. national security.

The History of the National Security Council

The National Security Act of 1947¹ created the National Security Council as one of several measures to reform the World War II-era national security infrastructure for the new challenges of the Cold War. Initially created as a senior policy coordination board for defense and foreign policy matters, the NSC's mission, statutory composition, standard operating procedures and staffing have been significantly modified over the past 60 years.

Today the NSC has four statutory members (the President, Vice President, Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense) and also includes the National Security Advisor (NSA), the Secretary of the Treasury, the Director of National Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other department secretaries, agency directors and advisors designated by the President. The NSC staff numbers 240 personnel located within the Executive Office of the President (EOP) and is managed by the President's National Security Advisor, also known as the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

¹ Among other things, the National Security Act of 1947 also established the Central Intelligence Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Department of Defense and the U.S. Air Force. The National Security Act Amendments of 1949 subsequently placed the NSC inside the Executive Office of the President (EOP) and also established the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the principal advisor to the national command authorities.



Impetus for Organizational Change

Only four days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the President appointed Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge as Homeland Security Advisor (HSA) and granted him membership in the NSC along with the President's most important national security staff.² On 29 October 2001, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 1 (HSPD-1) established the Homeland Security Council (HSC) as an organization roughly parallel to the NSC in function and purpose, tasking it with coordination of a wide range of homeland security-related activities and development of homeland security policies. HSC was organized into eleven policy coordination committees, among them law enforcement, border control, disaster response and preparedness, and protection of vital infrastructure and public health.

Inherent in the creation of the HSC, and later the Department of Homeland Security, was the recognition that the federal government was not effectively organized to deal with nonmilitary/nontraditional threats to the

American homeland. While the NSC had served the country well during the Cold War, providing effective homeland security in the post-9/11 world required the coordination of many domestic agencies, many of them not previously associated with traditional national security concerns.

Strengthening National Security Decisionmaking

In late February 2009, Presidential Study Directive 1 (PSD-1) ordered a 60-day interagency review of the White House homeland security and counterterrorism organization. Following the review, the President announced in late May the integration of the HSC into a broader NSC organization and national security staff. The HSA became a deputy to the NSA but retained direct access to the President. Moreover, the HSC would continue to operate as a venue for discussing homeland security issues.

In addition to the homeland security reorganization in the White House, the presidential directive created new offices to deal with cybersecurity, preventing weapons

The Army's Role in Homeland Security

The U.S. Army recognized the importance of the homeland security mission and remissioned and reorganized Fifth Army, located in San Antonio, Texas, for that purpose. U.S. Army North (USARNORTH)/Fifth Army's mission is to conduct homeland defense, civil support operations and theater security cooperation activities as the Army service component command to U.S. Northern Command in order to protect the American people and their way of life. On order, USARNORTH commands and controls deployed forces as a joint task force or joint force land component command.

More specifically, USARNORTH controls a brigade combat team (BCT)-sized emergency federal response force (currently 1st Brigade, 3d Infantry Division) to be called on in the event of terrorist attack, natural disaster and other domestic contingencies. This force will receive specialized homeland response training while also preparing for deployment in support of overseas operations. USARNORTH also trains active Army, Army National Guard and civilian personnel to provide homeland defense and support to civil authorities. These

programs include: 55 Army National Guard Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams, composed of 22 full-time military personnel dedicated to WMD and disaster response missions; Defense Coordinating Officers, seven-man teams located in each of the ten FEMA regions and trained to serve as liaisons between DoD and state and federal authorities during emergencies; and the Defense Support to Civil Authorities course to train civilian and military personnel to work together effectively during crises.

[For more information on USARNORTH/Fifth Army see Amanda Merritt Cumti, *U.S. Army North/5th Army: Building Relationships to Defend the Homeland and Meet Emerging Regional Challenges*, National Security Watch (Arlington, Va.: Association of the United States Army), 15 February 2007, http://www.ousa.org/pdfdocs/NSW07_1.pdf. For more information on Joint Task Force Homeland Defense (JTF-HD) see AUSA's Torchbearer National Security Report *Transforming U.S. Army Pacific* (Arlington, Va.: Association of the United States Army), June 2009, http://www.ousa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/TB_Pacific_June09.pdf.]

² The HSA's formal titles are Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Deputy National Security Advisor for Counterterrorism.

of mass destruction (WMD) terrorist attacks, transborder security, information sharing and national resilience (i.e., preparedness for and response to WMD attack, health pandemics and natural disasters). Furthermore, it created a global engagement directorate to more effectively use diplomacy, communications and international aid to support U.S. national security.

Conclusion

Because threats are global, transnational and diverse, the NSC, as the President's national security policymaking and coordinating apparatus, must take a more expansive view of U.S. national security than a traditional military view. The inclusion of the HSC in the NSC structure recognizes that homeland security, whether protecting against terrorist attack, natural disaster or the failure of vital infrastructure, is critical to U.S. national security. A strong defense complements U.S. foreign policy while weakness

in homeland security detracts from national strength and the ability to project power abroad.

In addition, the transnational nature of homeland security issues such as terrorism, global pandemics and cybersecurity links them inextricably to U.S. global policies—the domestic angle of these issues cannot be segregated from U.S. foreign policy, and it would be a mistake to attempt to do so.³ Meanwhile, the addition of a new global engagement directorate (and other functional offices) to the NSC is further realization that U.S. national security is dependent upon other non-traditional/non-hard power elements such as global imaging and world public opinion. This move does not seek to subordinate American policy to international opinion, but rather recognizes its significance and seeks to exploit it. The transformed NSC is designed to deal with a broader transnational policy environment and will ensure a more seamless, integrated and comprehensive approach to the most challenging 21st century problems.

Key Points

- The 21st century global threat environment requires new, post-9/11 security infrastructure and processes.
- The Homeland Security Council has been integrated into the National Security Council to ensure more seamless coordination of interconnected and transnational domestic and foreign policy issues.
- The National Security Council structure has been expanded to include new offices for cybersecurity, preventing weapons of mass destruction terrorism, transborder security, information sharing, national resilience and global engagement.
- The Homeland Security Advisor retains direct access to the President for homeland security issues; the Homeland Security Council will remain the primary venue for interagency deliberations on homeland security.

³ For more information on the increasingly globalized, complex and interconnected nature of U.S. national security, see David J. Kay, *Emerging Global Trends and Potential Implications for National Security*, National Security Watch (Arlington, Va.: Association of the United States Army), 29 May 2009, http://www3.usa.org/marketing/NSW_Trends_May09.pdf.



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