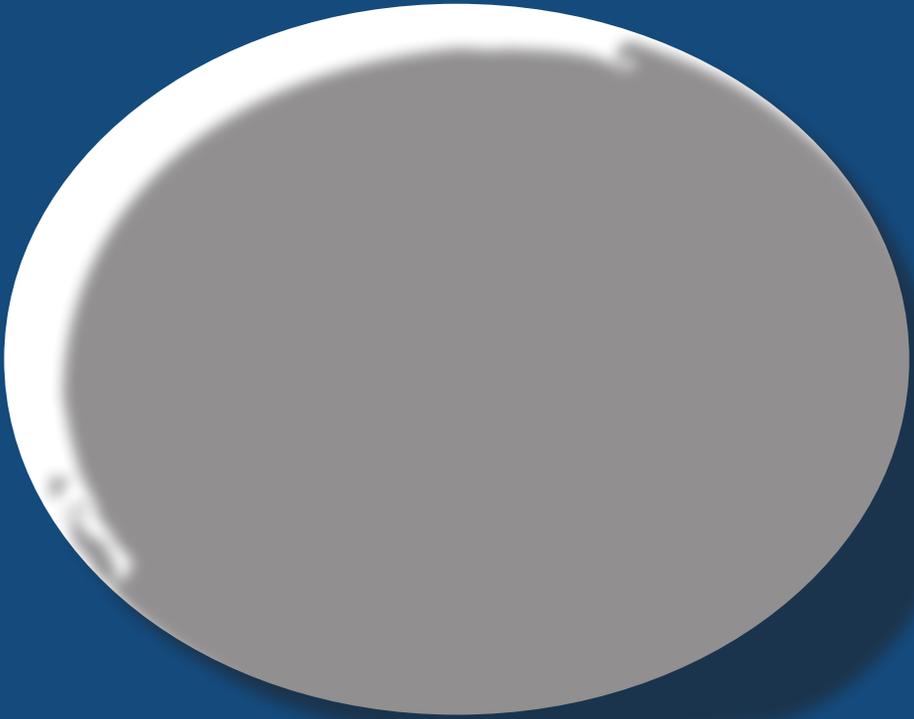


AMERICA'S DEFENSE MELTDOWN



Pentagon Reform for President Obama and the New Congress



13 non-partisan Pentagon insiders, retired military officers
& defense specialists speak out

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America's Defense Meltdown

PENTAGON REFORM FOR PRESIDENT OBAMA
AND THE NEW CONGRESS

13 non-partisan Pentagon insiders, retired military officers
& defense specialists speak out

Edited by Winslow T. Wheeler
Washington, D.C.
November 2008

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James P. Stevenson is the former editor of the Navy Fighter Weapon School's *Topgun Journal*; author of "The Pentagon Paradox" (Naval Institute Press, 1993), a history of the Navy's F-18 Hornet development; and of "The \$5 Billion Misunderstanding" (Naval Institute Press, 2001), a history of the Navy's failed A-12 Avenger II stealth bomber program. He also served as the assistant managing editor of *Air Safety Week* and west coast correspondent for *Defense Week*. He has written many articles in professional and popular journals and has lectured on numerous occasions on national security and aviation issues.

Maj. Donald E. Vandergriff (U.S. Army, ret.) served for 24 years of active duty as an enlisted Marine and Army officer. He has had numerous troop, staff and educational assignments in the United States and abroad. Donald Vandergriff was named ROTC instructor of the year 2002-2003 and the 3rd ROTC Brigade instructor of the year for 2003-2004. Vandergriff is a frequently published authority on the U.S. Army personnel system, Army culture, leadership development, soldier training, and the emergence of Fourth Generation Warfare. He has authored many articles and briefings, as well as four books: "Spirit, Blood and Treasure: The American Cost of Battle in the 21st Century" (Presidio Press, 2001), "The Path to Victory: America's Army and the Revolution in Human Affairs" (Presidio Press, 2002), "Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War" (Center for Defense Information, 2006) and "Manning the Future Legions of the United States: Finding and Developing Tomorrow's Centurions" (Praeger Security International, 2008). Vandergriff is currently a contractor in support of the Army Capabilities Integration Center Forward at Crystal City, Va.

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DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Genuine reform often requires swimming against strong currents of conventional wisdom and a refusal to pander to politically driven notions of what is and is not acceptable to think and do at the time. Governments often refuse to acknowledge and act on serious problems that undermine a nation's security – subsequently to be noted by even the most routine of historians to have been blind and foolish. The real test of statesmanship – no matter how unpopular the recognition of needed action may be among the blinkered paragons of contemporary conventional wisdom – is to note and act on the problems before they overwhelm the state.

For the wisdom and the moral courage to see and then act, the authors of this volume wish to recognize the memory of Col. John R. Boyd (U.S. Air Force). For the strength of character and extraordinary generosity of spirit that made this volume possible, the authors wish to thank and recognize Philip A. Straus, Jr., the founder of the Straus Military Reform Project of the Center for Defense Information, along with the additional support of the Stewart R. Mott Charitable Trust and its founder and guiding light, the late Stewart R. Mott, and the many private individuals who also contributed to the support of this work.

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PREFACE

The mere notion of a “meltdown” within the U.S. military may seem ridiculous to many. America’s armed forces are surely the best in the world, perhaps even in history. Democrats and Republicans, liberals, moderates and conservatives in Washington all agree on at least that. On what basis does a bunch of lesser known, if not obscure, analysts make such a preposterous assertion?

The vast majority, perhaps even all, of Congress, the general officer corps of the armed forces, top management of American defense manufacturers, prominent members of Washington’s think-tank community and nationally recognized “defense journalists” will hate this book. They will likely also urge that it be ignored by both parties in Congress and especially by the new president and his incoming national security team.

It is not just that following the recommendations of this book will mean the cancellation of numerous failing, unaffordable and ineffective defense programs, as well as the jobs, and more importantly careers, those programs enable. The acceptance of data and analysis presented in this book, and the conclusions and recommendations that flow from them, would require the elite of Washington’s national security community to acknowledge the many flaws in their analysis of weapons, Pentagon management and leadership of the nation in a tumultuous world. In too many cases, it would also require those elites to admit their own role in the virtual meltdown of America’s defenses.

Our equipment is the most sophisticated and effective in the world. We easily whipped one of the largest armies in the Middle East, not once but twice, and we have now clearly mastered a once difficult and ugly situation in Iraq. Success in Afghanistan will not be far away, once we devote the proper resources there. Those who take comfort in the last three sentences are the people who need to read and consider the contents of this book the most. Reflect on the following:

- America’s defense budget is now larger in inflation adjusted dollars than at any point since the end of World War II, and yet our Army has fewer combat brigades than at any point in that period, our Navy has fewer combat ships and the Air Force has fewer combat aircraft. Our major equipment inventories for these major forces are older on average than at any point since 1946; in some cases they are at all-time historical highs in average age.

- The effectiveness of America's "high-tech" weapons does not compensate for these reduced numbers. The Air Force's newest fighter, the F-35, can be regarded as only a technical failure. The Navy's newest destroyer cannot protect itself effectively against aircraft and missiles, and the Army's newest armored vehicle cannot stand up against a simple anti-armor rocket that was first designed in the 1940s.
- Despite decades of acquisition reform from Washington's best minds in Congress, the Pentagon and the think tanks, cost overruns in weapon systems are higher today, in inflation adjusted dollars, than any time ever before. Not a single major weapon system has been delivered on time, on cost and as promised for performance. The Pentagon refuses to tell Congress and the public exactly how it spends the hundreds of billions of dollars appropriated to it each year. The reason for this is simple; it doesn't know how the money is spent. Technically, it doesn't even know *if* the money is spent. Even President George W. Bush's own Office of Management and Budget has labeled the Pentagon as one of the worst managed agencies of the entire federal government.
- At the start of the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, the Pentagon's senior military leadership failed to warn the nation's civilian leaders of the tremendously difficult mission they were being asked to perform. Indeed, most of the military hierarchy did not even comprehend the difficulties of those missions and misperceived that the key issue was the number of military personnel sent to invade and then occupy an alien land in the Middle East. And then, many of them publicly complained that the civilian leadership had made a mess of things, saying so from the comfort of a retirement pension.
- In Congress and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, there have been acrimonious hearings and meetings, but no real oversight to appreciate just how and where programs and policies ran off the tracks. Except for a very, very small handful, no one has been held accountable. Indeed, it is not even apparent that anyone in Congress knows how to perform oversight. If they do, they apparently lack the spine to perform it in a manner Harry Truman, who carried out superb oversight as a senator during World War II, would call competent.
- Perhaps most damning of all, America has permitted itself, and most leaders from both political parties have aggressively pursued, a national security strategy that has torn us apart domestically, isolated us from our allies, made us an object of disrespect in the eyes of those uncommitted to our cause and caused our enemies to find motivation for greater action on their own part. In fact, it is not even clear whether our national leadership understands what an

effective national security strategy is, much less how to put one together and exercise it effectively.

And what of the great victories in the Persian Gulf, the 1991 war to liberate Kuwait and the 2003 invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein's hostile regime? Don't those U.S. operations prove our armed forces' historic superiority? America did quickly beat Iraq's armed forces in 1991, and in the early phases of the 2003 invasion, but those victories were both incomplete and against forces best characterized as grossly incompetent – perhaps even the “most incompetent in the world.”¹ Against the best of Saddam Hussein's forces, the so-called Republican Guard, America's military commanders in Operation Desert Storm in 1991 failed to capture or destroy the Guard as the single prop to Saddam's regime that enabled him to survive the war. In 2003, the Army's most senior commanders again made fundamental tactical, operational and strategic errors, and in one situation virtually panicked when faced with an enemy that was virtually immobilized by its own incompetence.²

The architects of the current war in Iraq slickly proclaim victory in sight thanks to the success of the “surge” there. Politically motivated to their very core, they studiously ignore the internal dynamics in Iraq and the region that have been inestimably more powerful in lowering the violence there. Blind as the proverbial bat, they and even opponents to the Iraq misadventure now proclaim that more of the same in Afghanistan will rescue the collapsing situation there. As Pentagon wags used to remark inside the building, “it's data-free analysis and analysis-free decisions” that are driving U.S. policy.

Many American soldiers, sailors, marines and aviators are rightly honored by the American public for their courage and sacrifice in Iraq and Afghanistan, but quality at the combat-unit level cannot compensate for inadequate leadership at the highest levels.

The authors of this volume seek to inform the new president and the new Congress of the pervasive nature of serious, decades-long problems that are corroding not just our military power, but our national strength. Each chapter addresses the nature of problems as we see them in a discrete sector of our national security apparatus and, just as importantly, proposes solutions based on the nature of the problem – rather than on the limited willingness of political actors to ape reform. These chapters progress from:

- an analysis of America's military heritage relevant to our international situation today in chapter 1,
- to a discussion of the components of a competent national strategy and how to construct and implement one in chapter 2,

- to a wholesale, perhaps even radical, change in how America trains its military leaders to think and operate (a change already beginning to occur in some important corners in the U.S. Army) in chapter 3,
- to two alternative, but not necessarily mutually exclusive, visions of America's ground forces in the Army and Marine Corps in chapters 4 and 5,
- to a prescription to make the U.S. Navy relevant to the 21st century, rather than to the middle of the last century, in chapter 6,
- to a compelling vision of the dogma that ails our Air Force and how to build combat air forces that are both astonishingly inexpensive and devastatingly effective in all forms of warfare in chapter 7,
- to a new plan for the vitally important airlift and support portions of our Air Force in chapter 8,
- to a new paradigm for our reserves and National Guard in chapter 9,
- to what has gone amiss for the last several decades in our weapons acquisition and Pentagon management apparatus in chapter 10,
- to a depiction of the hyper-cost of our shrinking, aging and less effective military forces in chapter 11.

Each author writes for himself and, we believe, the nation. We all can probably find something in each other's chapter with which we disagree, sometimes strenuously. However, all contributors share a common view that our problems are severe and longstanding, that they do not relate to just one political party or ideological faction, and that at the core of our problems and their solution resides a fundamental question of ethics.

We invite a national debate to probe our national security troubles and how best to summon the character and persistence that their solution will require.

ENDNOTES

1. Thomas Withington, "What If We Battled a Real Army?" *Long Island Newsday*, August 27, 2003.
2. For further discussion, see Winslow T. Wheeler and Lawrence J. Korb, *Military Reform: A Reference Handbook* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), Chapter 6.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter Summaries and Recommendations

Chapter 1

Introduction and Historic Overview:

The Overburden of America's Outdated Defenses

Lt. Col. John Sayen (U.S. Marine Corps, ret.)

Our military forces have become high-cost dinosaurs that are insufficiently lethal against most of the enemies we are likely to face. Our forces have also broken free of their constitutional controls to the point where they have essentially become a presidential military. Congress exerts meaningful control neither in peacetime nor in wartime – and has lost all control over going to war. The large peacetime standing army established just before World War II (and maintained ever since) has become a vehicle for misuse by presidents, and multiple other parties both internal and external to the Pentagon.

The large standing forces were supposed to facilitate professional preparation for war, but the essential officer corps never truly professionalized itself. Thus, we were almost invariably unprepared, in mind set and in doctrine, for the conflicts we faced. In both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam, America hurriedly threw together unprofessionally led armies to fight – too often ineffectively. The result, especially today, has been notably mediocre senior military leadership – with only the rarest exceptions. At the same time, our armed forces have become ruinously expensive, as they simultaneously shrink, age, and become remarkably less capable. In Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, the Army and Marine Corps have been stretched to the limits of their strength to fight enemies not even a tenth as numerous as those they faced in Vietnam. We have become a pampered, sluggish, weak-muscled elephant that cannot even deal effectively with mice.

Chapter 2

Shattering Illusions: A National Security Strategy for 2009-2017

Col. Chet Richards (U.S. Air Force, ret.)

Decisions by the last two Democratic and Republican administrations have left the country deeply in debt, depleted our military strength, lowered our national standard of living, and strengthened those around the world whose goals conflict with ours. Much of this can be traced to the initially politically-popular use of military force to attempt to solve problems that are inherently social, economic or political and

therefore do not admit of military solutions. Chief among the examples are Iraq and Afghanistan, where the initial successes against third-rate military opponents have dragged on into separate occupations of a bewildering array of religious, political and ethnic groups, few of which wish to be dominated by Americans. The solution requires the next administration to explicitly restrict the use of our military forces to those problems that only military forces can solve and that the nation can rally to, and to eschew the use of our forces to serve hubris, propaganda or dogma.

The advent of nuclear weapons has limited the utility of military force against other major powers: there will be no replays of World War II. For smaller conflicts, history has shown that military occupations of developing countries or alien cultures will be expensive and very unlikely to succeed. Furthermore, the continuing epidemics of crime and political instability in areas where force was initially successful, as in the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East, show that the West still has no solution to the problem of rebuilding destroyed states.

Recommendations

- The new president needs to formally assess the policy objectives for which military force still has utility in today's world, and propose a program of revamping our force sizes and missions, shaped by the essential requirement to act in concert with America's national ethic and our allies on each of those missions.
- In parallel with this presidential revamping, Congress and the president need to fundamentally change the preparation and presentation of intelligence so that misuse of force based on false pretext becomes far more difficult.
- Congress and the president need to dramatically strengthen regulation of private contractors in the public sector, particularly in the military and intelligence services.

Chapter 3

Leading the Human Dimension Out of a Legacy of Failure

Col. G.I. Wilson (U.S. Marine Corps, ret.)

and Maj. Donald Vandergriff (U.S. Army, ret.)

Institutional failures pervade the current management of military men and women, by far our most important defense resource. The end of the Cold War necessitated fundamental change, yet we remain hobbled by an archaic and dysfunctional personnel system in each of the active military services and their all-important reserves. That archaic system fails to recognize and benefit from the new realities of leading human resources in the 21st century. Without fundamental changes in how we nurture and lead our people, there can be no real military reform.

The military's legacy system is built on flawed constructs: a centralized "beer-can" personnel system, lack of imagination in nurturing leaders, and faulty assumptions about human beings and warfare itself. This concoction is worsened by ingrained behaviors: adversity to risk, preference for the status quo and "group think," preoccupation with bureaucratic "turf battles," and valuing contracts above winning wars.

Recommendations

- The fundamental reform requirement is to learn to lead people first and manage things second. Instead, today we administer people as a subset of managing things.
- The primary route to valuing people is to learn to nurture highly innovative, unshakably ethical thinkers. Sadly, in today's armed forces such people, those who lead by virtue of their courage, creativity, boldness, vision, honesty and sometimes irreverence, are known as mavericks. The military services must learn it is admirable to disagree with, change, and improve the institution the individual serves and remains loyal to. Such change-seeking individuals are the ones who best adapt and prevail in humankind's most stressful circumstance: war. They are the war-winning leaders.

Specific recommendations for bringing such people and such values to the fore are articulated in the chapter.

Chapter 4

Maneuver Forces: The Army and Marine Corps after Iraq

Col. Douglas Macgregor (U.S. Army, ret.)

and Col. G.I. Wilson (U.S. Marine Corps, ret.)

Today's Army and Marine warfighting structures have reached block obsolescence. The strategic conditions that created them no longer exist. The problematic structures are characterized by antiquated, inappropriate World War II-style organizations for combat, inventories of aging and broken equipment thanks to unaffordable and mismanaged modernization programs, heavy operational dependence on large, fixed foreign bases, disjointed unit rotational and readiness policies, and a very troubling exodus of young talent out of the ground combat formations.

Compensating for these deficiencies by binding ground forces more tightly within "networked" systems, such as the Army's misguided Future Combat Systems, does not work and is prohibitively expensive.

Reform lies in changes that promise both huge dollar savings and powerful synergies with proven – not hypothetical – technologies and concepts fielded by the air and naval services. This means a laser-like focus on *people*, *ideas* and *things* in that order.

Recommendations

- Because defined, continuous fronts on the hypothetical World War II model do not exist today and because ubiquitous strike capabilities and proliferating weapons of mass destruction make the concentration of ground forces very dangerous, mobile dispersed warfare is the dominant form of combat we must be prepared to conduct.
- Needed organizational change means new, integrated, more fundamentally “joint” command and control structures for the nation’s ground maneuver forces. This approach expands the nation’s range of strategic options in modern warfare operations against a spectrum of opponents with both conventional and unconventional capabilities.
- Because Marines are now much more likely to conduct Army-like operations far from the sea than they are to re-enact Inchon-style amphibious landings, it is time to harmonize Army and Marine deployments within a predictable joint rotational readiness schedule.
- The authors focus on ways to reorient thinking, organization, and modernization in the ground maneuver force to:
 1. reshape today’s force for new strategic conditions (mobile dispersed warfare);
 2. exploit new technology, new operational concepts, new organizations, and new approaches to readiness, training and leadership; and
 3. extract huge dollar savings through fundamental reorganization and reform.

The authors do not pretend that the changes outlined in the chapter will gain easy acceptance. New strategies, tactics and technologies promising more victories and fewer casualties are typically viewed as threatening by general officers and senior civilians who are comfortable with the status quo.

Chapter 5

A Traveler’s Perspective on Third and Fourth Generation War

William S. Lind

While the United States Marine Corps espouses a doctrine of Third Generation (maneuver) War, it is organized and trained only for Second Generation (attrition) Warfare. The chapter proposes an alternative structure that reflects Third Generation doctrine.

Recommendations

- Most Marines should again become “trigger pullers.”
- The size of the officer corps above company grades should be drastically reduced.
- A “regimental” system – based on the battalion – would provide mentally and morally cohesive units through unprecedented personnel stability.
- Reserve units should become as capable as active-duty battalions.
- Marines need to convert from line infantry to highly mentally and physically agile, true light (“Jaeger”) infantry.
- Marine aviation should be restructured and re-equipped to reflect the “Jaeger Air” close air support concept with less costly and more effective task-designed, single purpose aircraft.

The chapter concludes with a brief look at Fourth Generation War concepts, for which the proposed Marine Corps force structure would also be suitable.

Chapter 6

The Navy

William S. Lind

America’s geography dictates that it must remain a maritime power, but today’s U.S. Navy remains structured to fight the aircraft carrier navy of Imperial Japan. Reform can only proceed from a fundamental understanding that people are most important, ideas come second, and hardware, including ships, is only third.

Recommendations

- The main personnel deficiency of the Navy is an officer corps dominated by technicians. That reinforces the Navy’s Second Generation institutional culture. Reform requires adopting a Third Generation culture and putting the engineers back in the engine room.
- Fourth Generation War demands the Navy shift its focus from Mahanian battles for sea control to controlling coastal and inland waters in places where the state is disintegrating.

- Submarines are today's capital ships, and the U.S. Navy must remain a dominant submarine force while exploring alternative submarine designs.
- Aircraft carriers remain useful "big boxes." However, they should be decoupled from standardized air wings and thought of as general purpose carriers, transporting whatever is useful in a specific crisis or conflict.
- The Navy should acquire an aircraft similar to the Air Force's A-10 so it can begin to effectively support troops on the ground.
- Cruisers, destroyers and frigates are obsolescent as warship types and should be retired; their functions assumed by small carriers or converted merchant ships.
- The Navy should build a new flotilla of small warships suited to green and brown waters and deployable as self-sustaining "packages" in Fourth Generation conflicts. (The Navy's current "Littoral Combat Ship" is an apparently failed attempt at this design.)

Chapter 7

Reversing the Decay of American Air Power

Col. Robert Dilger (U.S. Air Force, ret.) and Pierre M. Sprey

The Air Force's resource allocations and tactical/strategic decisions from the 1930s until today have been dominated by airpower theoretician Giulio Douhet's 1921 assertion that strategic bombardment of an enemy's heartland can win wars independently of ground forces.

The authors' analysis of combat results and spending since 1936 shows the unchanging dominance of that strategic bombardment paradigm has caused the Air Force to:

1. leave close air support capabilities, which have proven far more effective than strategic bombing in determining the outcome of conflicts, essentially unfunded over the last 70 years;
2. habitually underfund effective air-to-air capabilities; and
3. engender serious U.S. military setbacks and unnecessary loss of American lives in each modern conflict America has fought.

The actual combat results of strategic bombardment campaigns in each conflict since 1936 show a consistent pattern of failure to accomplish the assigned military