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Department of State Strategic Planning Workshop II

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A State Department request, made at the senior level, asked the Army Chief of Staff if the Army could help State improve its capacity to undertake strategic planning. In April 2001 the Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership conducted the initial Department of State Strategic Planning Workshop. That workshop's success led to a second workshop for 52 additional Department of State leaders conducted 4-5 February 2002 at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. This paper summarizes the discussions and issues raised at the conference.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the workshop was to expose State Department participants to the Army's strategic planning process and how it is integrated into the professional development of the officer corps. The first day included overviews of the Army's institutional planning processes, the integration of planning in professional military education, and military strategic planning concepts and methodologies. State Department participants devoted the second day to facilitated group discussions. These groups worked to reach their own conclusions and proposed ways ahead with regard to the development of future visioning, diplomatic planning, and training and education requirements based upon the Department of State's own culture, operations and needs.

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

Successful planning within an organization or institution requires vision, leadership and thoughtful preparation. At the beginning of the workshop, the Commandant, United States Army War College reviewed institutional strategic planning at Carlisle Barracks. He outlined the leader's role in reinforcing values, developing and communicating vision, mission, and goals, and the requirement to develop scorecards for goals and objectives with measurement criteria, baselines and benchmarks. He emphasized the requirement to regularly assess progress and periodically review goals to ensure that the organization's vision, mission, and goals remain relevant as time passes.



PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND PLANNING

The Army instills a culture of planning in its officer corps through both its educational system and subsequent operational assignments. The Army conducts formal military education at five points in a typical officer's military career. At each educational level the student is trained to develop plans and orders appropriate to his grade and future level of assignment. The basic structure of both the military decision making process and the format of its resulting plans are common for all levels of war (tactical, operational, and strategic) and echelons of command, however both the process and the plans themselves become more complex at the higher levels of military operations.



In studying war at increasingly higher levels, military education supplants military training. At the Army War College the curriculum educates the student for future service at the strategic level. Whereas previous schooling trained officers to create complex plans within a mostly known tactical or operational environment, students at the senior service colleges are educated to work effectively in a less structured and more uncertain strategic environment. This strategic environment is increasingly joint, interagency and multinational, and success requires the senior leader to master new communication, persuasion and negotiation skills.

WORKSHOP GROUPS

Workshop participants included senior Foreign Service Officers and Civil Service employees from 26 bureaus within the Department of State. Each participant was assigned to one of three workshops to discuss issues and to propose solutions relating to future visioning, diplomatic planning, or training and education at State. Workshops were led by Senior Foreign Service Officers and supported by members of the Army War College staff. Following three hours of dialog each group presented its findings in a briefing to the plenary session.

Envisioning the Future

On the first day of the workshop, participants learned about strategy formulation and grand strategy. Strategy is the calculated relationship between ends, ways and means, (or between objectives, concepts and resources.) Grand Strategy involves organizing the military, diplomatic, economic, and informational elements of power toward achievement of objectives. In formulating a strategy one systematically considers the ends, ways and means framework. The most important part of developing a strategy is identifying the desired ends. In other words, *“Ends matter, and ends matter most.”*

In formulating a strategy for planning and education at the Department of State, the strategic planner should consider what the future world might be like, so the organization can identify the core competencies of the Department of State and its workforce at some time in the future. It isn't crucial to accurately predict the nature of the world in the future, but it helps to visualize a world vastly different from today in order to investigate opportunities for change. The future visioning workshop considered an alternative futures model to describe one potential world of 2025. In this world the United States takes a global worldview, world power becomes dispersed, and exponential technological change is ongoing.

Workshop participants envisioned the role of diplomats of the future as legitimizing the U.S. message to the world based on this worldview. They would need the skills to manage multinational situations involving

non-governmental and international organizations, corporations, and governments as allies in trade and public diplomacy. These individual skills include multidisciplinary capabilities and awareness, deep language and cultural specialization, interagency agility, and a practical understanding of information technology. The group strongly suggested that the future mid-level Foreign Service Officer be a diplomatic practitioner, not a supporting player, at the overseas mission.

The future visioning workshop recommended that senior leadership at State set a vision that would energize the organization toward establishing diplomacy as a key instrument of national power. Additionally, this group proposed that the Department of State conduct further study to determine its flagship requirements for diplomacy in the world of 2025.

Diplomacy and Planning

This workshop group reviewed the mechanisms and organizations responsible for strategic planning at State. The group's consensus was that existing strategic planning processes and mechanisms can and should be improved, rather than undertaking a major revamping of those planning mechanisms. The group believed that the current leadership at State was taking an active role in strategic planning, and that the current planning and budgeting process was improving, but this group also thought that the Department continues to lack a culture of planning.



The group recommended developing more concise and relevant Mission Performance Plans (MPP) and Bureau Performance Plans (BPP) with formalized feedback. The group proposed increasing emphasis on accountability and performance. This workshop further recommended implementing structured professional development, adding a personnel float for education, and reflecting work on MPPs or BPPs on annual performance reviews. Participants also saw a need for a crisis contingency fund to enable resources to be allocated quickly during crises without raiding ongoing programs.

The diplomacy and planning workshop saw a need for vision to be embraced and communicated down through the organization. While it is evident that State lacks a culture of planning, strategic planning is indeed conducted. State's long-range planning efforts are overshadowed by its tendency to be crisis-centered, minimally manned, and inadequately funded.

Education and Training at State

Historically, the State Department's culture *tolerates* training to achieve finite ends. With the exception of required entry level and Deputy Chief of Mission level courses, State does not have a professional education program that reinforces core values and prepares professionals for future assignments over the course of a career. The education and training workshop group proposed that State develop a professional education program that identifies values and core competencies and adds leadership, policy, planning and resource management education for its mid-level employees.

The workshop identified numerous impediments to changing the nature of education at State. Historically there has been no personnel float, and many supervisors and managers perceive training and education as a negative, with all attendees taken "out of hide." While Foreign Service Officers could be programmed into professional education between assignments, the relative inflexibility of the Civil Service system makes career management for those employees problematic. Finally, any universal education must be seen as beneficial to all of the career tracks and employment statuses.

The group wanted to see top leadership drive personnel management and educational change at State. They recommend that promotion and assignment of professionals be linked to an individual's completion of mandatory training, and they proposed that incentive pay be added or increased for acquired skills. The group

called for adding flexibility to increase Civil Service assignment mobility. The overall goal of the initiative should be to institutionalize training and education as an integral part of the career development of all State Department employees.

This group identified a cogent requirement to establish a mid-level overseas tradecraft course. This course would be scheduled around a school-year rotation schedule to minimize family disruptions, and ideally would include a several-month interagency detail. The curriculum would emphasize State Department core values and competencies, grand strategy, planning and budgeting, and the interagency process. It would focus on refreshing and strengthening skills, knowledge, and current policy required in functioning as a mid-level diplomat overseas.

CONCLUSION



The Department of State bears the flag in the use of the diplomatic element of national power, and is the lead government agency overseas. Its part in developing national security policy in Washington demands interagency competence and agility. In these roles it is crucial that mid-level State Department professionals fully understand the National Security Strategy, learn to master strategic leadership and planning, and become skilled practitioners in the interagency process. These skills are not wholly experiential—professional employees will not develop all these and other core competencies on the job. By establishing a more formal and integrated professional education and

development program the Department of State stands to gain organizational cohesion and interagency respect, enhance its planning capability, and strengthen its application of the power of diplomacy.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP II

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