

Banquet Address – SOF at the Crossroads

Jim Locher

1. I am delighted to join you this evening and to see so many SO/LIC colleagues
2. I am also truly honored to receive the Lynn Rylander Award
  - a. Lynn and I worked together for many years, beginning in the 1970s
    - i. In PA&E
    - ii. ISA and Senate Armed Services Committee
    - iii. In SO/LIC
  - b. I know of his unyielding commitment to strengthening SO and LIC capabilities
    - i. The SO/LIC community benefited tremendously from the power of his ideas and from his courage.
  - c. We were robbed of his extraordinary leadership and vision by his sudden death
3. The SO/LIC community has come a long way since the congressionally mandated reforms in 1986.
  - a. Result of the dedication, wisdom, and hard work by many heroes
  - b. I often marvel at the early SO/LIC heroes
    - i. Bill Yarborough, Sam Wilson, Dick Scholtes, and many more
  - c. Lynn Rylander was among those early heroes
  - d. Many of you know of the exploits of the Special Planning Directorate in OASD (ISA)
  - e. Under Noel Koch's direction, this office began the SOF revitalization in the wake of the tragedy at Desert One
  - f. Some of the directorate's key members:
    - i. Lynn Rylander
    - ii. Tim Davidson
    - iii. Bill Lowry
    - iv. George Talbott
    - v. Peter Probst

- g. The uphill struggle of this directorate is epitomized by a statement by Noel Koch. In March 1984, he said:
  - i. “I have discovered in critical areas of the Pentagon, on the subject of special operations forces revitalization, that when officials say no, they mean no; when they say maybe, they mean no; and when they say yes, they mean no; and if they meant anything but no, they wouldn’t be there.”
  - h. I salute those who have gone before and am delighted to be associated with them.
- 4. This symposium’s theme is SOF at the Crossroads.
  - a. This is a hugely important and timely topic, but I want to speak with you this evening about another crossroads being faced by the entire national security community.
- 5. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the United States has suffered a number of setbacks
  - a. Terrorist attacks of 9/11
  - b. Troubled stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan
  - c. Inadequate response to Hurricane Katrina
- 6. These setbacks are not coincidental; they are evidence of a system failure.
  - a. Our national security system is not capable of handling the threats and challenges that confront us in today’s complex, fast-paced world.
  - b. This is not about the lack of talent or commitment by our national security professionals.
    - i. They are working incredibly hard and with unsurpassed dedication.
  - c. The problem is that much of their hard work is wasted by a dysfunctional system.

7. There are dozens of problems in our national security system, but three are key.
  - a. First, we are not able to integrate the diverse expertise and capabilities of our departments and agencies.
    - i. Our challenges require effective whole of government integration – but we remain in outmoded, bureaucratic, inward-looking, competitive stovepipes.
      1. Some have begun to sarcastically call these stovepipes “cylinders of excellence.”
    - ii. We need to be able to work horizontally across department and agencies boundaries, but we are constrained by a vertical government that permits the placement of a premium on the parochial desires of the departments and agencies at the expense of genuine national requirements.
    - iii. Our organizational arrangements are misaligned with our security challenges.
  - b. The second problem is that civilian departments and agencies are under-resourced and culturally and administratively unprepared for national security roles
    - i. We have heard a great deal about this issue recently, especially in two speeches by Secretary Gates
    - ii. Part of the problem stems from our outdated definition of national security
      1. Focus on military, diplomacy, and intelligence
  - c. Third, Congress -- which is also stovepiped in its committees with narrow jurisdictions -- reinforces divisions in executive branch
    - i. Congress focuses on the parts and cannot address a whole-of-government approach to national security missions
    - ii. Congress never had its own National Security Act of 1947
  
8. These problems and others in the national security system are not new.
  - a. Our system has almost never been capable of addressing national security missions with a whole of government approach.

- i. We have been unable to integrate all of the instruments of national power.
  - 1. We could not do it in Vietnam or Operation Just Cause in Panama or elsewhere.
  - 2. When we were working on the Cohen-Nunn Amendment, the Senate Armed Services Committee was troubled by this lack of integration – LIC Board at the NSC
- b. We have faced horizontal challenges with a vertical government for many decades.
- c. Why have our shortcomings become more serious?
- d. Two answers: complexity and rapidity of change
  - i. In an increasingly complex and rapidly paced world, our vertical stovepipes are less and less capable.
  - ii. The gap between our capacities and the demands being placed on the national security system is widening.
    - 1. This is a frightening conclusion.
- e. Newt Gingrich: “We have met the enemy and it is our bureaucracy.”

9. What must be done?

- a. Sweeping reforms of the Executive and Legislative Branches.
- b. Marginal changes will not do.
- c. We need a 21<sup>st</sup> Century government for 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges.

10. I have devoted the last two years working to bring about such historic changes.

- a. I am leading the Project on National Security Reform, sponsored by the Center for the Study of the Presidency.
- b. Our goal is approval of a new system early in the next administration.
- c. We envision three sets of reforms
  - i. A new national security act, replacing many provisions of the 1947 Act – It will be the National Security Act of 2009.
  - ii. New presidential directives governing the operation of the national security system

- iii. Amendments to Senate and House rules to bring about necessary congressional reforms

11. I have a distinguished coalition of former officials guide the Project on National Security Reform

- a. Brent Scowcroft, Jim Steinberg, Newt Gingrich, Tom Pickering, Norm Augustine, General Jim Jones, and 15 others of great expertise and experience
- b. 300 national security professionals on 14 working groups
- c. Support of the Department of Defense, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and Department of Homeland Security
  - i. Cooperative Agreement with DoD
- d. Caucus of 15 members in the House of Representatives
- e. Produce reports on July 1 and September 1

12. This national security reform effort is important to the SO/LIC community

- a. SO and LIC missions depend on an effective interagency process.
- b. This is also the kind of battle the SO/LIC community is used to fighting.
  - i. It is uphill and against all odds.
  - ii. It is a battle that must be fought and won.
  - iii. The nation's security cannot be preserved without a transformed system.

13. As we engage in this struggle, let the call go out to the Lynn Rylanders of today.

- a. There is more work to be done.