



## **National Commission on the Future of the Army**

2530 Crystal Drive, Zachary Taylor Building, Suite 5000  
Arlington, VA 22202

**SUBJECT:** Operational Force Subcommittee Discussion with Assistant Secretary of Defense, Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities, 23 October 2015, Minutes

**Date:** 23 October 2015

**Time:** 0907-1015 hours

**Location:** Room 3D852A, 2000 Defense Pentagon, Washington DC 20310

**Format:** Round table unclassified discussion

### **Attendees:**

HON Dr. Kathleen Hicks, NCFCA Commissioner, Chair, Operational Force Subcommittee  
Mr. Robert M. Scher, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities  
Ms. Mara Karlin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Strategy and Force Development  
MAJ Vinson Morris, Subcommittee Designated Federal Officer (DFO)  
Mr. Scott Sharp, Operational Force Subcommittee Staff Member

### **Meeting Summary**

The Operational Force Subcommittee Chair met with ASD Scher and DASD Karlin to discuss the future operational environment and potential mission requirements for Army forces. The meeting started at 9:07 a.m. with opening remarks from the DFO explaining the application of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

The following are key points from the discussion:

- Although the US does not have a nation state peer in the near future, two nations have studiously evaluated how the US fights and developed countermeasures based on these evaluations. These countermeasures require adjustments to US tactics and operations. The Air and Missile Defense (AMD) threat is dramatically different than the past 20 years and the Army cannot assume US air superiority.
- Participants discussed the role of enablers in “Gray Zone” conflicts short of war. US conventional force dominance in interstate conflict will lead to the expansion of Gray Zone conflicts.
- Operational support and sustainment enabler forces provide non-threatening assurance to our allies and partners. The Army can expect increased demand for employing key enabling

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capabilities, such as Special Operations Force, logistics assets, Air and Missile Defense formations, and assets for Building Partner Capacity (e.g., State Partnership Program).

- Participants discussed several capability gaps and the concerns these gaps pose as the Department of Defense (DOD) looks to the future and the evolving security environment. Especially troubling capability shortcomings include countering Weapons of Mass Destruction and air and missile defense.
- The US should expect adversaries to recognize US force strengths and preferred combat tactics, and to employ counter strategies in future conflicts. US military forces should not expect the technological advantages experienced in recent conflicts. Technological advantages can be negated, thus allowing a group accustomed to operating with lower level technology to have an advantage.
- The role of US force presence (forward stationed or rotational) and the impact on deterrence was discussed at length. Discussion included the nuanced difference between assurance and deterrence and the relationship of both to force posture.
- Attendees discussed Army force deployment/reaction timelines and suggested the complex challenges for operations in the Baltic States may require additional equipment sets forward stationed. Participants indicated the Baltic States situation remains a particularly vexing challenge for the US and NATO.
- Participants discussed risks in Northeast Asia and the value of the Pacific Pathways initiative.
- The need for more rigorous analysis for Phase IV (Stabilize) planning and requirements determination was discussed. This identified shortcoming in DOD analysis constrains how the Department and the interagency can prepare for likely future missions. The evolving security environment indicates a need for additional analysis of Phase IV requirements for force sizing and shaping.

The meeting concluded at 1015 hours.