

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH AMANDA DORY, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR STRATEGY VIA TELECONFERENCE SUBJECT: THE 2010 QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW TIME: 1:00 P.M. EDT DATE: THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2009

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PETTY OFFICER WILLIAM SELBY (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Hello. I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Thursday, June 11, 2009.

My name is Petty Officer William Selby, with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating your call today.

A note to our bloggers on the line today: Please remember to clearly state your name and blog or organization in advance of your question. Respect our guest's time, keeping questions succinct and to the point.

Today our guest is Ms. Amanda Dory, deputy assistant secretary of Defense for Strategy, who will discuss what the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review entails, what it doesn't, and why it matters to our troops on the ground.

And Ms. Dory, if you have your opening statement, you can go ahead with that.

MS. DORY: Thank you very much. And good afternoon to the bloggers who are on line here. I appreciate your time this afternoon, and also the opportunity to do this. This is my first bloggers roundtable, so I'm dipping my toe into the water of the new media, and looking forward to seeing how it goes.

As mentioned, my name is Amanda Dory. I'm the deputy assistant secretary of Defense for Strategy. And the Strategy Office is one of quite a few in the Department of Defense that is heavily engaged in the Quadrennial Defense Review at the present time.

What I'd like to do is briefly take a few minutes to explain what the QDR is, why we're doing it, why anyone might care about it, then give you a sense of what's entailed with the QDR and some of our emerging themes and, last but not least, why it matters to the troops on the ground. And then, I'd be very happy to take any questions and engage in dialogue on it.

In terms of what is a QDR and why do we conduct a QDR, "QDR" stands for Quadrennial Defense Review, as you've already heard. And it's essentially a report to Congress. The department is now engaging in its fourth Quadrennial Defense Review. But it's not just any report to Congress; it's really the mother of all reports to Congress.

The department produces hundreds of reports every year to Congress, but this one really stands out in terms of its scope and its scale, and then the periodicity, the -- that it's timed to the change in administration every four years.

The legislation gives us a list of 18 areas that we're required to respond to, and we do explore those issue areas that Congress mandates. But in addition, the secretary of Defense and successive secretaries of Defense have seized this reporting requirement as an opportunity to articulate their vision for the department and to use it as a decision-making opportunity.

The care factor -- why would anybody care about the QDR? -- there are multiple reasons. You can start out with the global interests that the United States has, and the report articulates those interests and our strategy for achieving them. Additionally, when you think about all the instruments of national power, the military instrument is a significant one, and this report really looks into what is the military instrument of power required to do on behalf of the nation.

And the third element of why the report is important has to do with just the sheer size and scale of the Department of Defense, when you think about the resources that are provided to the Department of Defense by the American taxpayer.

In terms of the -- an overview of how the QDR process works, the QDR process was kicked off in April by Secretary of Gates -- by Secretary of Defense Gates, and will culminate in the report to Congress in the February time frame. So we're engaged in this process for close to a year-long period of time.

The report is jointly led by the Office of the Secretary of Defense in support of Secretary Gates and by the Joint Staff on behalf of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. So it's a co-led report. It involves all elements of the Department of Defense. It involves the services; it involves the combatant commands and all of the civilian components of the Department of Defense.

In some ways, I think of the QDR as a five-ring circus. There's a ring that involves all of the in-the-building deliberations and analysis. There's another ring that really represents the interface we have with members of Congress and their staff as we endeavor to meet their legislative intent. There's a third ring that really has to do with other federal departments and agencies that represent other instruments of national power that the military instrument of national power works with. A fourth ring is really represented in terms of our allies and partners around the world. There's very heavy international interest in terms of what the department -- the conclusions that it arrives at as part of the QDR process.

And last but not least, there are all kinds of stakeholder constituencies. It includes defense industry, it includes the American public, it includes the private sector, the think tank community, the press. There are many interested parties who are interested in the conclusions that the department will reach in the QDR.

A few more comments and then I'd like to open it up for any questions and discussions. What I'd like to do is just briefly talk about what the content of the QDR will look like.

Typical QDRs make a significant effort to characterize what the future security environment looks like. This is because the legislation requires us to look out 20 years into the future and consider what capabilities the department might need to have to address the challenges we would see from the near term out to that 20- year mark long term. So a characterization of the future security environment is a central substantive element of the QDR.

A second substantive element of the QDR is a national defense strategy that will explore what our strategic ends are, the ways that we will endeavor to achieve those ends, and then the means we have available to pursue those. So an articulation of U.S. national defense strategy is also part of the QDR.

A third key part of the QDR, and one that is highly focused upon, is what is the metric -- by what metric will the department measure the amount of activity that it's required to do in the world in response to presidential tasking. How expensive will our operations be in peacetime? How many? And how many contingencies should the department plan to respond to at home and abroad? And that's a key force planning and force sizing determination that lets us understand, when you determine what that metric is, determine whether we have adequate capabilities to meet that or not.

Lastly, the QDR is an opportunity for the secretary to take key decisions on a whole variety of topics. They can be policy-related decisions. They can be decisions in terms concepts of operation we would pursue. They can be decisions in terms of force structure, end strength or capabilities.

In this regard, Secretary Gates has highlighted what we view as the central challenge for this QDR, which is looking at what our balance is, in terms of near-term operations, and being able to succeed in those, while continuing to look out to the future and to hedge against future challengers, in our ability to meet any challenges there.

Thus that central balancing point is one that all those who are engaged in the QDR process, at this point, are seeking to understand and develop hypotheses, in terms of what balance -- between our operations today and operations in the future, between our efforts to institutionalize irregular warfare, or those types of operations that involve non-state actors and adversaries, vis-a-vis future challengers who may or may not be state or non-state actors.

So with that, I'd like to stop for now and open it up to any questions you may have. Thanks very much.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you, ma'am.

And Beth, you were first on the line.

Q Thank you. I'm Beth Wilson with Homefront in Focus. And I am a military spouse of an active-duty. I have two questions, if I may.

The first is, this is the fourth QDR. And looking back at the previous three, how effective have those reports been, in determining the future? And were we spot-on? Were we accurate? And what have you learned, to go forward with this one?

And once you've answered that one, I'll ask my second question.

MS. DORY: Excellent. Thank you very much. That's a great question to ask.

With each of the reviews that we've undertaken thus far, there are many looks after the fact. Some of them are formal looks. The GAO for example does an audit after every Quadrennial Defense Review.

There are independent panels that are stood up, to assess the QDR. And we do our own internal lessons learned process with each QDR, in the effort to validate and improve upon the process each time and to explore the conclusions, in terms of their accuracy and their impact. I would say one thing about QDRs, which is that the expectations surrounding them are enormous, in part because the stakes are viewed as so high. QDRs are perceived as a key lever, for the secretary and the leadership of the department, in terms of taking key decisions.

And in some sense, a phenomenon we notice is that leading up to a QDR, many decisions, tough decisions, start to be deferred as people await. The QDR is an opportunity to take a lot of decisions at the same time.

One thing that Secretary Gates has talked to recently -- he took some very hard decisions with the fiscal '10 budget, as you know, and he said at the time that what he did was not defer decisions that were ready to be taken. So he did not defer until the QDR process to move forward in the areas where he could do so.

He has spoken to the -- most recently in terms of thinking about QDR as an evolutionary process rather than a revolutionary process, that they don't have to -- that they tend to underdeliver from the perspective of some people in terms of their expectations that all tough decisions are made at one time.

What I would say, looking backward, in terms of how effective QDRs have been, I think the comment that I just made -- it was trying to lead to the point that sometimes expectations are inflated in terms of how much can be accomplished in the QDR.

I would say the most recent QDR, in 2006 -- one of the key decisions coming out of there had to do with decisions to shift in the direction of irregular warfare and really improve the department's capacity for irregular warfare, and key decisions were taken at that time in terms of the growth of Special Operations Forces, for example, that would better position us to be able to conduct irregular warfare operations. Every QDR has key decisions such as those that have proved to be effective decisions in terms of posturing us for the current security environment.

Does that adequately address your question in terms of effectiveness?

Q Yes. Yes, thank you. And my second -- am I allowed to ask -- (inaudible) -- question?

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Well, let me --

MS. DORY: (Inaudible) -- right ahead.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: We'll go back and forth. I just want to make sure -- David, are you still there?

Q I'm still here.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Okay. Yeah, you can go ahead with your question. Then we'll come right back to you, Beth. Q Okay.

Q Hi. This is David Axe with War Is Boring. Thanks for taking the time to talk to us. I appreciate it.

MS. DORY: Absolutely.

Q Great. So I was hoping you could address some of the thinking driving decisions in the QDR related to naval force structure. Let me sort of provide my -- the context for that. You know, there's this idea of a greater shift towards irregular warfare and lumping that with the preparations for conventional conflict. Does that mean that all the services are being balanced that way, or is one service being shifted for more of a conventional warfare focus while others are skewed more towards irregular warfare? In other words, so with the Navy, are we seeing that drive towards that same mix of permanent irregular warfare capabilities and conventional warfare?

MS. DORY: That is a great question, and there are a lot -- there are a lot of different dimensions kind of wrapped up in there. Let me kind of start off and then see if I've adequately addressed what you're talking about.

In terms of looking across the services and at the Navy in particular, part of what we're doing analytically is to look at what the requirements have been for each service over time in terms of steady state or those types of activities that we do on a day-to-day basis -- and in the case of the Navy, the presence-type activities, of course, are front and center there -- and then looking at activities or contingencies where the -- that are larger contingencies where the department in some sense has to stretch or to surge to be able to succeed in those operations. So we have a lessons-learned dimension where we are backward looking.

And then the second thing that we're doing is looking forward into the future. And we use an alternative futures and scenarios approach to look out into the future and to identify, to the best that we're able, different situations in which the department might be called upon to respond.

Some of those are -- we're moving away from the kind of conventional or traditional descriptor of operations in the recognition that there aren't really clean, crisp dividing lines in terms of types of warfare. What we believe that we're observing today and believe we'll see more of in the future is really kind of a hybrid warfare construct that will have both irregular and what -- and disruptive and, you know, what have been looked at as conventional or traditional approaches knitted together. And so the scenarios that we look at are designed to test across the joint force to look at what capabilities might be needed and what capacity might be needed.

I would say that there isn't -- my way of trying to hit dead-on your question is, I don't think any of the services will be adjusted to one form of warfare or another. I think the view is that all of the services will continue to need to be multi-mission-capable, that they'll need to be able to operate at the low end, so to speak, or in more irregular kind of dimensions, and also at the high end in terms of very capable state adversaries with advanced technology.

So there isn't a sense of kind of optimizing any forces for one end of the spectrum or the other. The point the secretary's been making, in terms of balancing, I referred to earlier. I described a kind of temporal balance in terms of succeeding in the near term while preparing for an uncertain future.

He also used the balancing metaphor when he was talking about the need to be able to conduct irregular types of operations and to be able to conduct more of the high-end-type operations. Does that get at your question?

Q I think so. Thank you.

MS. DORY: You're welcome.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And back to you, Beth.

Q I just wanted to know -- you mentioned, you know, why should we care, and what does that mean for the service member, the boots on the ground. What does that mean for the service member and the boots on the ground?

MS. DORY: Thank you for that. I forgot to include that final point to my earlier remarks. And it's really important.

You know, on the one hand, it might seem that a congressional report would be a bit esoteric and not that relevant to the troops on the ground. But what makes it relevant to the troops on the ground really is the secretary's injunction to the department that what we need to do is focus on succeeding in the conflicts that we're in. And this is a point that he has made repeatedly in terms of his focus on institutionalizing irregular warfare, and institutionally -- institutionalizing our approaches to irregular warfare.

What we've seen over the preceding period of time is that we have learned slowly, and painfully, in some cases, through operational experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, we are facing asymmetric, irregular adversaries who are very dynamic. And we are -- we have been able to adapt and evolve and succeed in terms of dealing with them.

But this has been a -- it's been painful, in terms of DOD as an institution, because the institution wasn't -- wasn't -- isn't arranged to be as flexible as it could have been or should have been, perhaps, in terms of adjusting our equipment, our forward-deployed equipment. In terms of the unit formations that were sent forward, we have used, over time, a series of ad hoc approaches, in terms of resourcing, in terms of personnel, those activities.

And the secretary on multiple occasions in his testimony and in his speeches has talked to the fact that there isn't a strong constituency within DOD or within the defense industry or on -- with Congress, in terms of the irregular conflicts; that historically, or for the past 50 years, at least, we've been focused on the more conventional, large-force-on-large-force conflicts that were organized, trained and equipped to succeed in those. And this has been a very painful process, in terms of reorienting the institution to succeed in terms of irregular.

So what the secretary has continued to hit on, and is critically important in this QDR, is we need -- the department needs to institutionalize its approach to irregular warfare, to ensure that we are fully supporting the troops on the ground with the equipment that they need and with the training

that they need; and that we're not doing so in an ad hoc way, but that we're doing so in a very supportive way that is not -- it is faster and more dynamic and able to get to the troops what they need in the time they need it.

So for that reason, that very important reason, I think it does matter to the troops on the ground, because what the secretary is telling us is that that's the top priority. Succeeding today and supporting the troops on the ground so they can succeed today, that really is our top priority in this review.

Q Thank you. That's very helpful. Because I am a spouse and I write and broadcast to spouses -- although I'm very interested in the higher end of this -- as part of the QDR, is there a -- is there a component where they take a look at the family structure and family support as part of the entire force structure?

MS. DORY: That's a great question. There isn't -- the QDR is an overarching review, and it can explore a lot of different dimensions. I would describe what you were referring to as part of the enabling mechanism of the department, to be able to support the families, to be able to support the spouses of deployed forces. And I think that the review will address that. That's been something that the secretary and especially the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have focused on, in terms of the entire support network for deployed forces.

So I do think we'll see those types of themes, the need to continue and improve upon support for the military family community, as a dimension of the QDR. PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Okay.

And David, did you have some more questions?

Q No, thank you. I'm fine, thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: So Beth, you can follow up, if you have some more questions also.

Q Thank you.

Just one more question, which is probably getting down into the weed, instead of staying higher. But since my companion asked about naval forces, I just wondered if you have any opinion.

What is the report looking toward, in terms of the continued IA program? Navy Times says -- you know, last week's cover page -- 10,000 more sailors going to deploy as IAs.

Can you speak to that at all? Or is that part of the comprehensive plan for the more irregular warfare structure of the forces?

MS. DORY: When you say IA, you're referring to the individual augmentee program.

Q Correct, and the GSA.

(Cross talk.)

MS. DORY: That is -- when I was talking about the institutionalizing dimension, those types of -- you are probably very familiar with the lingo, but the kind of in lieu of or other substitute kind of approaches that are taken, in terms of personnel deployments. Because there aren't, you know, units, and the services haven't been structured and maintained over time, to be able to support in a way that doesn't lead to pulling individuals into IA-type positions.

That's absolutely part of what the institutionalizing irregular warfare gets after, that in some cases, the kind of -- you know, I mentioned organized training.

This is really getting at the organized point and, to a lesser extent, the training point, but that we're not currently organized in an optimal way, to be able to support the kind of long duration contingencies that we find ourselves in, you know, leading to ad hoc approaches. And that is definitely one of the things that the secretary was including, when he spoke to the institutionalization points.

Q Super. I assumed that, but thank you for the clarification.

Thank you.

MS. DORY: Absolutely.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you, ma'am.

And if you have any closing comments, you can go ahead with those now, ma'am.

MS. DORY: Thank you.

I just appreciate the opportunity to spend a little time with you. The QDR is again, on one hand, it's a congressional report.

It sounds kind of boring and inside the Beltway. But it does have real-world implications in terms of the way the department uses its resources. It has implications in terms of how we relate to our interagency partners, how our allies and friends see us in the world, how our potential adversaries see us.

We understand that the final report is pored over in many corners of the world as well as its intended end user in terms of Congress. And so we're very conscious of the fact that there are a lot of different stakeholder communities who care about the QDR, and we are endeavoring to outreach to all of them. And I just appreciate the opportunity to be able to share some of this with you today.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you very much, ma'am. And thank you to the bloggers for your questions and comments.

Today's program will be available online at a bloggers link on DOD.mil, where you'll be able to access a story based on today's call, along with source documents such as the audio file and print transcripts.

Again, thank you, Ms. Dory and our blogger participants. And this concludes today's event.

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