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National Security Requires a National Perspective—and Congressional Action

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Among other important initiatives, the Congress in 1986 required that, every four years, the Pentagon review the ways and means for employing and sustaining military power and report back to Congress. Yet Congress does not require such an analysis of any other aspect of national security.

This omission makes no sense. Congress needs comprehensive assessments of the nation's homeland security programs and an independent review that assesses how national defense and homeland security efforts fit within the context of the overall interagency national security effort.

Without a government-wide assessment of America's national security apparatus, security functions could gravitate to wrong agencies or departments. In other sectors of national business, this would merely lead to inefficiency; but in the area of security, it could be deadly. By clearly defining agency functions, both the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will be able to minimize overlap by focusing their resources on known responsibilities. Furthermore, such an overview would define the security roles of agencies beyond DOD and DHS, which could help ensure that they are not burdened with responsibilities that should fall under the purview of other government entities.

The current QDR process is inadequate to address the nation's broad national security requirements. To overcome this shortfall, Congress should:

- Establish a requirement for periodic reviews of homeland security and
 - Create a one-time National Security Review Panel.
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The Quadrennial Defense Review. The Congress requires the Department of Defense to conduct a quadrennial defense review (QDR). Since its inception, the QDR has been used to shape and explain defense policies, military strategy, force structure decisions, and resource allocations. In

2005, the Pentagon will undertake its fourth QDR. However, there are three significant shortfalls in the QDR process.

First, Congress does not receive an independent assessment of the Defense Department's analysis. In conjunction with the first QDR, Congress created a National Defense Panel (NDP), an independent panel of defense intellectuals and national security experts, to review the results of the QDR. However, Congress has not required independent assessments of subsequent QDRs.

Second, the QDR tends to lead Congress and the Administration to focus excessively on military instruments as the best solutions to national security challenges at home and abroad. Indeed,

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“every problem looks like a nail, when all you have is a hammer.” Congress should give equal attention to ensuring that all the U.S. national security instruments are adequate, complementary, and properly integrated.

Third, even when the QDR identifies important issues requiring improved interagency processes and capabilities, as a DOD-authored document, it cannot really speak to how national security issues should be addressed across multiple agencies or influence how other federal agencies should change to meet these challenges.

For the first QDR, the NDP helped to address this second major flaw in the QDR process by providing an overall assessment of all of the nation’s national security instruments. However, since the first QDR, the periodic defense reviews and assessments of other national security needs have not been linked. This is regrettable. For example, in 1998, the Administration and Congress established the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century to conduct a broad national assessment similar to the NDP. However, the commission’s reports were not linked to the QDR, and its results were largely ignored even though it predicted terrorist attacks on the scale of the September 11, 2001, strike and foresaw the need for creating the DHS.

The Next Steps for National Security. Nowhere is the need for a detailed assessment on the scale of the QDR more important than in the area of homeland security. “DHS 2.0: Rethinking the Department of Homeland Security,” a comprehensive report by The Heritage Foundation and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, clearly establishes the need for Congress to reevaluate DHS roles, missions, and resources and how these efforts fit into the context of other federal domestic security efforts.

In addition, Congress needs to undertake a post-9/11 assessment of all of the nation’s critical national security instruments. Particular attention should be given to U.S. public diplomacy and foreign assistance programs, the defense industrial

base, the intelligence community, and the use of space for national security purposes. Specifically, Congress should:

- **Establish a requirement for periodic reviews of homeland security.** Congress should require the DHS to conduct quadrennial reviews of the department’s strategies, force structure, resources, and threat assessments. The Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QSR) should be timed to coincide with the midpoint of the presidential term. The first QSR should be specifically tasked with addressing roles, missions, authorities, and resources.
- **Create a one-time National Security Review Panel.** In parallel with the first QSR, Congress should establish a nonpartisan National Security Review Panel (NSP). The NSP should be charged with providing an independent assessment of the QSR as well as providing an overall assessment of national security programs and strategies. The NSP should place particular emphasis on evaluating the compatibility of the QSR and QDR and the state of other essential security instruments such as public diplomacy, the defense industrial base, and the use of space for national security purposes.

Conclusion. Congress should enact legislation establishing the requirements for a QSR and an NSR as soon as possible. Such legislation could be included in the upcoming supplemental appropriations bill.

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