
Goldwater-Nichols: A Critical Look

January 24, 2007, 0830-1300
The Center for Strategic and International Studies
1800 K Street, NW
B-1 Conference Level

The Center for Strategic and International Studies has long been a resource for proponents of defense reform, from its 1985 study¹ that helped prompt the Goldwater-Nichols Act to its current Beyond Goldwater-Nichols Project. Like most defense analysts and practitioners, its scholars have generally supported the view that the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reform Act of 1986 moved American defense beyond the mistakes of Vietnam, enabled ultimate victory in the Cold War, provided the framework for overwhelming victory in the Gulf War, and ensured American military dominance throughout the 1990s.²

Nevertheless, critiques of Goldwater-Nichols can be found even among its most ardent supporters. Some have argued that Goldwater-Nichols failed to sufficiently reform the acquisition and requirements processes and encouraged continued service parochialism under Title 10 authority of the service chiefs.³ Others worry that power has become too centralized in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the expense of civilian leadership and the service chiefs.⁴ Some have even argued that the Act enabled poor DOD decision-making processes and thus impaired the quality of military advice to civilian leaders.⁵ This last set of critics has pointed to US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq to underline their points.

To inform this debate, CSIS's International Security Program will host a conference that allows prominent defense experts to voice their continued concerns over Goldwater-Nichols and its unintended consequences. Twenty-one years after the passage of the most cited defense reform in US history, this conference will inform future defense reform or broader national security reform efforts with its presentation of alternative viewpoints.

Goldwater-Nichols: A Critical Look

Conference Agenda

0830-0850

Welcoming remarks and introductions

Before Goldwater-Nichols to Beyond Goldwater-Nichols

Dr. Stephen Flanagan

Kissinger Chair in National Security, and Director of International Security Program, CSIS

Ms. Kathleen Hicks

Senior Fellow, International Security Program, CSIS

0850-1005

Panel 1

Does the Military Provide Adequate Advice to the Commander in Chief and Congress?

Moderator: Ms. Christine Wormuth

Senior Fellow, International Security Program, CSIS

Panelists: MG (Ret.) Robert Scales, USA

Independent Consultant

Maj Gen (Ret.) Charles Link, USAF

Former President and CEO, National Defense University Foundation

Mr. Thomas Donnelly

Resident Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

Dr. Peter J. Roman

Resident Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

1005-1015

Break

1015-1130

Panel 2

Lessons Learned from Iraq & Afghanistan:

Assessing "Jointness" at the Operational and Strategic Level

Moderator: Dr. Clark Murdock

Senior Adviser, International Security Program, CSIS

Panelists: Dr. Lani Kass

Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force

COL (Ret.) Douglas A. MacGregor, USA

Defense and Foreign Policy Consultant, Glenside Analysis, Inc.

Mr. Jim Thomas

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Resources & Plans

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1130-1145

Buffet Lunch

Panel 3

1145-1300

Who Should Manage Acquisition? Who Should Decide Military Requirements?

Moderator: Mr. David J. Berteau

Senior Associate, CSIS

Panelists: The Honorable Kenneth J. Krieg

Former Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics

Mr. Peter Levine

General Counsel of the Senate Armed Services Committee

Dr. Clark Murdock

Senior Adviser, International Security Program, CSIS

1300

Adjourn

Notes

¹ *Toward a More Effective Defense: The Final Report of the CSIS Defense Organization Project.* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1985).

² See, for example, James A. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon.* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2004).

³ See, for example, Murdock, et al, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: Phase I.* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2004), 16, 37-39.

⁴ See, for example, Peter J. Roman and David W. Tarr, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff: From Service Parochialism to Jointness," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 113, no. 1 (Spring 1998); Peter J. Roman and David W. Tarr, "Military Professionalism and Policymaking: Is There a Civil-Military Gap at the Top? If So, Does it Matter?" *Soldiers and Civilians* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

⁵ For critics, see, for example, Eliot A. Cohen, "Civil-Military Relations: Are U.S. Forces Overstretched?" *ORBIS* (Spring 1997); James A. Kitfield, "A Better Way to Run a War," *Journal of the Air Force Association* Vol. 89, No. 10 (October 2006); Richard H. Kohn, "Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations" *The National Interest* no. 35 (Spring 1994).