



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
(RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION)
1000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000
AUG 31 2009

**MEMORANDUM FOR UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION,
TECHNOLOGY, AND LOGISTICS**

SUBJECT: Comments on the Defense Science Board report on the Fulfillment of Urgent Needs

Reference: (a) Final Report of the Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on Fulfillment of Urgent Operational Needs

The Department of the Navy greatly appreciates the effort and attention of the Defense Science Board's Task Force on Fulfillment of Urgent Operational Needs, and concurs with both the spirit and intent of its Final Report. The Department considers the support of our men and women in combat as our most important responsibility. We wholeheartedly agree with the overarching theme that we must continue to modify existing processes to meet these responsibilities, as the changing nature of the environment and tactics employed by our enemies requires continuous adaptation.

The Department of the Navy concurs with the report's primary finding that "all of DOD's needs cannot be met by the same acquisition processes, and that the degree of urgency and technology readiness can be used to differentiate "rapid" and "deliberate" acquisitions." Both the Navy and Marine Corps currently operate with this dual path approach and these paths have been mutually supporting. Our Urgent Needs Process is a bottom-up approach, meeting the immediate needs of our forward deployed forces. Each of these urgent needs is also inserted into the deliberate PPBES capability development process for consideration along side our other requirements. This parallel processing approach brings the lessons learned from the interim solutions into the deliberate process and ensures that enduring capabilities associated with urgent needs are addressed.

The report also recommends the establishment of a fund for rapid acquisition and fielding. The Department agrees that the recommendation to provide resources is important as it may help alleviate potential delays in executing rapid acquisition and fielding urgent need solutions. Identification and approval of funding for high cost efforts has been cited by our internal assessment as a factor in the reduction of cycle time for the vetting of urgent needs requests. In particular, an examination of raising the "Threshold" level at which Service leaders are delegated authority to reprogram available funds should be further explored as possible means to reduce cycle time. Lastly, the issues associated with funding may also relate to the type of appropriation of funds. We request that providing additional authority to change the "color of money" also be considered.

While the establishment of a centrally managed fund for rapid acquisition and fielding may be a benefit it might also create certain impediments. The concern relates to possible delays that may come from the recommended establishment of “an oversight group [to] hold periodic meetings to aid in prioritization”. The concept of “periodic meetings” implies that urgent needs would be “batched”, awaiting the next meeting and thus adding cycle time to the response. Finally, very careful consideration must be given to attempts to “prioritize” urgent operational needs. While the definitions of urgent operational needs vary slightly across the Department of Defense, they all revolve around the concepts of mission criticality and loss of life. It is our policy that if an urgent operational need is validated as critical to missions or lives it cannot be prioritized: it must be met.

The Department also agrees that establishment of an organization within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics that “works in partnership with the Services’ acquisition, doctrine, training, and sustainment elements” could provide an additional and complementary solution execution path. However, there is merit in maintaining the capability for each Service to respond to urgent needs that are unique to that Service's mission or for which the Service has a unique expertise. An excellent example of this is the single manager approach for Counter Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Device Electronic Warfare that capitalizes on the unique expertise of the Navy in explosive ordnance disposal and electronic warfare to lead the development and acquisition of systems for all the services.

The Department of the Navy welcomes any effort, from any source, to improve our ability to meet the urgent operational needs of our Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen. We have implemented many improvements to our Departmental processes over the last few years and are currently collaborating with your staff to improve cross-service coordination. We stand ready to support you in any effort to continue and expand these improvements.



For Brian Detter

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy
Expeditionary Warfare

cc:

OPNAV (N8)
DCMC, CD&I
DASN (ExW)