

The material below presents the briefing slide text accompanied by recommended oral comments for people interested in military reform to give to audiences. While the presentation was created in the 1980s, it is remarkably relevant to the defense issues that confront the nation today.

In each case the slide text is followed by the oral comments:

Reforming the Military

Military Reform:

A Winning Military at an Affordable Price

Why are there so many people interested in reshaping or reforming the military?

First, many of us are worried that our military can no longer win.

Second, we have doubts as to whether the American people will continue to support high and increasing budgets for a non-winning military.

Briefing Summary

- Our defenses in bad shape
 - Money alone won't cure problem
 - The problem is correctable, if we make fundamental changes in:
 - People
 - Strategy and Tactics
 - Hardware
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Let me summarize what this talk is about:

First, our defenses are in bad shape – probably worse than they've been at any time since the beginning of the Korean war.

Second, more money spent the same way we spend it today won't make the problem go away – might make it worse. More money does not equal more defense. (I think you'll agree we are seeing more and more evidence of this.)

Third, the problem of declining defense at increasing cost can be cured if:

- We understand the disease rather than the symptoms; and if
- We make fundamental changes in the building blocks of a successful military: people, strategy and tactics, and hardware.

Goals of Military Reform

A military that can win

Preserve consensus in favor of a strong defense

In other words

Getting the defense we pay for

At the outset, it is necessary to be clear about what we are doing. We have two simple goals:

One, we want military forces that can win when called upon.

Two, we want the support of the nation for such forces, not for one or two years, but for the long haul -- to 1990 and beyond.

We think the American people won't support the defense the country needs unless they are convinced they're getting their money's worth.

What does it take to win wars?

People

Strategy and Tactics

Hardware

To win wars takes three basic elements. In order of importance, they are:

- People, because wars are fought by people, not by weapons.
- Strategy and tactics, because wars fought without innovative ideas become pointless bloodbaths.
- Hardware, because weapons that don't work or can't be bought in adequate quantity will bring down even the best people and the best ideas.

People:

Quality: Talent for combat

Training: for confidence, skill and imagination

Building bonds: to create unit cohesion

The most important element in winning is to have soldiers better than the enemy's.

How can we get and keep better soldiers? By:

- Attracting and promoting people who have the character, skill and initiative to succeed in combat. (Quality is not a set of scores on a standardized test nor a diploma.)
- Training to hone unit as well as individual combat skills and also to build tactical initiative and imagination.
- Building personal bonds and shared experiences; units, like societies, need cohesion to keep from crumbling under the stress of war.

Slide on Strategy and Tactics is missing.

Our military needs to be trained in innovative tactics and strategies that will lead to quick, decisive victories at minimum cost in American lives.

This requires, first, an understanding of conflict. Conflict can be viewed as repeated cycles of observing-orienting-deciding-acting by both sides (and at all levels). The adversary who moves through this cycle more rapidly gains an inestimable advantage by disrupting his enemy's ability to respond effectively as an organized force.

These cycles create continuous and unpredictable change on the battlefield. Our tactics and strategy need to be based on the idea of adapting to, and shaping, this change – and doing so faster than the enemy.

In other words we need to out-think and out-maneuver our enemy.

What does this mean for us? It means we must shift from our traditional firepower/attrition approach to a new emphasis on maneuver warfare. Why? Because firepower/attrition tries to destroy the enemy man-by-man and inch-by-inch. On the other hand, maneuver warfare shatters the cohesion of the enemy's formations by emphasizing speed, change and unpredictability.

In other words, maneuver warfare substitutes speed for tonnage and ideas for blood.

A dramatic example of the difference between maneuver warfare and the firepower/attrition approach is the battle for France in 1940. The allies believed in firepower and attrition. They tried a linear, static firepower defense (including the famous Maginot Line) stretching from Switzerland through Belgium.

The Germans, exploiting maneuver warfare, attacked with a smaller number of mostly inferior tanks – 2700 versus 3200 for the allies. They feinted on the right in Belgium and Holland and attacked heavily on a narrow front through the Ardennes Forest, thereby end-running the Maginot Line. They exploited their breakthrough with stunning speed, with one armored corps covering 230 miles in the next 14 days. France, Belgium and Holland fell in 43 days at a cost to the Germans of 27,000 killed, much less than our losses in Vietnam.

The blitzkrieg had indeed managed to substitute idea for blood.

Hardware

Provide numbers in combat

Be effective in combat

Help troops move and adapt fast in combat

Although people and ideas are more important, in hardware what counts is having a lot of it and making sure it works in combat.

More specifically, the hardware numbers that count are the numbers of weapons actually available to engage the enemy. Weapons in the hangars and in the maintenance pits are a liability, not an asset.

Similarly, the hardware effectiveness that counts is not the engineering excellence on the R&D proving ground but the effectiveness achieved in the hands of ordinary troops facing the stress and chaos of combat.

New hardware, particularly complex hardware, needs to be evaluated in terms of its effects on our people and our tactics. We cannot afford to continue pursuing technology for its own sake. Instead, we need to exploit technology to simplify the soldier's task and help him win. Effective hardware helps our soldiers adapt to change and permits them to react and move faster than the enemy.

Operating today's unsuitably complex hardware occupies so much of our soldiers' attention that it makes their tactics rigid and their reactions slow and predictable – which leads to high casualties and few victories.

What has happened to U.S. Military Strength?

- 30 years' military failure
 - Lack of combat power
 - Restriction of tactical and service options
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The very evident decline in U.S. military strength – measured in people, tactics and strategy, and hardware – is the reason why reshaping the military is so urgently needed.

Our last major military success was thirty years ago: it was the brilliant Inchon landing (which was opposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff).

The decline in combat skills of our soldiers, sailors and airmen is evident from top to bottom. Examples abound: an unprecedented number of Army colonels are refusing command positions; fighter pilot retention before the last recession hit a record low and is currently deteriorating again: it has been years since the U.S. won a NATO tank gunnery competition (and now no country can win because they have abandoned nation vs. nation competition.)

Not all of this can be blamed on the all-volunteer force. Some of it is due to replacing combat leaders with managers. Some is due to excessive emphasis on procurement and the debilitating effects of procurement politics on real leadership. Much is due to insufficient training resulting from the complexity, unreliability and expense of the weapons we have selected.

For similar reasons, the growth of our logistics and maintenance “tail” is increasingly consuming our combat “teeth.”

Inevitably, this severely restricts the range of new tactical and strategic options being envisioned by our military leaders. This, in turn, reinforces the attrition warfare, “body count” mentality of Vietnam and centralized command failures of the Mayaguez, Son Tay, and Desert One raids (each of which was planned by the Joint Chiefs).

The next charts show another dimension of our military decline: the erosion in hardware numbers.

Slide shows three charts on annual production of tanks/year, warships/year, fighters/year.

(New charts available in Wheeler and Christie briefing charts.)

No matter whether we look at tanks, ships or fighters, the picture is the same: A strong decline in numbers ever since the Korean War.

In the early fifties, we produced over 6000 tanks per year. In the FY '86 budget we are buying 920 tanks.

In 1962, we launched 15 surface warships. In FY '86, the Navy funded 3 new surface warships. In the early fifties, we procured over 6,000 fighters per year. The FY '86 budget bought less than 370 fighters. Can we attribute these startling declines to shrinking defense spending on hardware? Not at all. Today we are spending, in constant dollars significantly more each year to develop and buy ships and fighters than we did in the early fifties. For tanks, we are spending about the same as we spent in the early fifties to develop and buy 10 times as many tanks.

Is there an alternative to business as usual?

This is the crucial question. If there are no alternatives to “business as usual,” we must resign ourselves to increasing military weakness and rapidly eroding public support for defense.

The next slides try to explore the nature of “business as usual.”

Business as usual: Hardware

Replace each generation with one 2 to 5 times more expensive

Pretend complex technology can outweigh numerical superiority

Sacrifice training and readiness for procurement on increasingly complex equipment

Create rigidity because of length of R&D cycle and lack of design competition

“Business as usual” makes hardware the first priority. What do we mean by “business as usual” in hardware?

First, we replace each generation of weapons with one 2 to 5 times as expensive and complex.

Next, we convince ourselves that the increasing complexity of the new hardware somehow overcomes the increasing numerical inferiority created by the expensive weapons we select.

Then, because the complex hardware inevitably grows in cost, we cut our forces and siphon money from training and readiness to pay for overruns.

And, of course, because large complex system dictate far longer and far fewer R&D programs, we suffer from technical rigidity, from an inadequate range of technical choices and from 10 to 20 years of delay before the troops see the new equipment.

Further, few of these large R&D programs involve competitive prototype fly-offs, so we suffer from atrophying design teams and overly complex, flawed designs.

Business as Usual: Strategy and Tactics

- Internal bureaucratic demands – not outside world – shape decisions
 - Low agility
 - Firepower/attrition style of warfare
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In tactics and strategy, “business as usual” means:

First, our commanders have almost no time to spend on the outside world, that is, no time for strategy and tactics, no time for out-thinking the enemy. Why? Because most of their time and attention is captured by the internal paperwork and maintenance demands of the complex, centralized, computerized command systems we create.

The same thing happens on the battlefield. There, our centralized command structures and ponderous organizations lead directly to low agility, that is, the inability to react, shift and move faster than the enemy. And, of course, centralization stifles the initiative of junior commanders, further impeding our ability to react and innovate.

Hand-in-hand with ponderous command systems and slow decision-making goes the reliance on firepower, attrition and linear defense – after all, these are easier for large bureaucracies to define, regulate, quantify and “manage” than the unpredictability, decentralization and lightning response required by maneuver warfare.

Business as Usual: People

- Adapt people to hardware
- Let managers dominate
- Move people constantly to suit personnel system
- Field training gets lowest priority

Result

- Poor unit cohesion
- Unprecedented retention problem

On the people side “business as usual” means:

First, people and organizations are forced to adapt to the hardware instead of vice versa.

Second, people are no longer led. Instead, they are “managed” by administrators and computers they never get to see.

The centralization and computerization of personnel “management,” in turn, leads to a dehumanizing and demoralizing level of personnel turbulence and turnover – higher than that of any other military organization in the world. And, this turbulence severely degrades professional competence at all levels and makes unit cohesion impossible.

Next, the increasing dominance of administration, procurement and maintenance means that field training and honing of combat skills only get the time and resources that are left over.

And lastly, of course the promotion system generally favors personnel managers or procurement managers over combat leaders, tacticians and trainers.

The result is inevitable: We now have less unit cohesion, less quality in our combat units, and less ability to attract and retain qualified people than ever before. Even worse, many of the people we lose tend to be the most combat-oriented – the very ones we most want in war.

New Approaches

- We can not present a complete program in a short briefing
 - Following slides are examples of specific reform ideas
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Naturally, in a short talk we cannot present a complete program for reshaping the military. We do have in mind a wide range of specific and constructive alternatives to “business as usual.”

The fundamental basis of these alternatives is derived from examining the nature of the three elements of successful forces: people, strategy and tactics, and hardware.

New Approaches: People

We start with people, not hardware, because people are more important than hardware in winning wars.

It is clear that people and human nature change very little over time. Strategy and tactics change more than human nature, and hardware changes even more dramatically over time than either of the preceding two. In other words, human nature has a high degree of constancy while, at the other extreme, hardware has very little. What does this imply? It means we must accept the idea the idea there can be no stable planning if we start with hardware and try to force tactics and strategy as well as people to fit the vagaries of hardware changes.

Put bluntly: without starting with people there can be no tactical and strategic themes for winning. Additionally, it becomes very likely that the hardware we design will impede rather than enhance people's ability to shape and adapt to change in combat.

New Approaches: People

Provide more money and time for field training in non-‘canned’ exercises

Buy simple equipment to permit more attention to tactics and training rather than maintenance

Adopt a regimental type system for better cohesion

Promote more combat leaders and tacticians

Although most of the defense debate centers around hardware and money, the most urgently needed reforms are in the people area. We’ll cover four examples here.

To begin with we need a significant increase – perhaps a doubling – in the money and time for field training, particularly for the two-sided, free-play exercises that are crucial to developing initiative and new tactics. This means increasing operating budgets for more shooting, more driving, more steaming and more flying.

Complex, unreliable equipment shrinks training time and makes major increases in training unaffordable. Buying simpler weapons inherently provides more training time and, even more importantly, permits more attention to tactics instead of maintenance.

To address the crippling problem of deteriorating unit cohesion, we need to build bonds among officers and their men by leaving them together without rotation for several years. This can only be done by decentralizing the power of personnel systems and by moving towards a regimental-type system.

Last and most important, no people reforms will be lasting unless we change the type of people we promote. Morale, retention, loyalty and cohesion will not improve unless we promote more combat leaders and tacticians rather than procurement and personnel managers.

New Approaches: Strategy and Tactics

Slide is missing

The value we place on strategy and tactics can be gauged by the absence of a single office in the Pentagon charged with the mission of studying and developing either strategy or tactics. [You'll be glad to know that now there is a DASD for Strategy.] The changes in promotion policy we just discussed will certainly help, but changes in fundamental ideas are also necessary.

First, we need to decentralize our massive command systems and reduce the constant bureaucratic demands they impose on our combat leaders. Only this will give our commanders the time to focus on combat and the enemy. Initiative and inspiring leadership cannot be transistorized.

This, in turn, will permit us to substitute maneuver and tactical innovation for our traditional fixation on firepower and attrition – and we need to do this at all levels from the rifle squad to the theater command.

Just think about the importance of this issue in facing the Russians: Are we more likely to win by firepower and attrition against a nation that accepted 20 million deaths in WWII – or do we have a better chance of using maneuver to exploit the rigidities of the world's most centralized society?

And, finally, we need to encourage tactical imagination and initiative particularly among junior officers, by providing the opportunity to try and test new ideas in the field – and we need to reward innovative attempts, even when they don't work.

New Approaches: Hardware

Shape equipment to fit the stress and uncertainties of actual combat, rather than the theories of laboratory technology

Pursue brilliantly simple technology that expands our tactical opportunities

We are often told that the central defense hardware issue is the dilemma of “quantity versus quality.” This is a dangerously misleading slogan. Why? In most major weapons, the real choice we face is between a few complex, unreliable, ponderous and ineffective weapon systems and numerous simple, small, agile and effective systems. In other words, the choice actually is “complexity” versus “quality and quantity” and the dilemma is that the “business as usual” establishment prefers the “complexity” side.

How do we turn this around? First, we need to insist on equipment that will retain effectiveness when facing the stress, chaos, insufficient training and hasty maintenance that inevitably accompany war. Weapons based on idealized conditions of combat imagine by advocates of complex technology are likely to let our soldiers down. Witness the disastrous combat records of the Sheridan tank, the F-111 bomber and the Sparrow missile in Vietnam.

Second, we need to pursue brilliantly simple technology that permits new and expanded tactics rather than emphasizing ever more complex technology to support the same old, rigid tactics. Classic examples of such brilliantly simple advanced technology include the 30mm depleted uranium cannon round which allows our fighters to achieve unprecedented lethality against tanks, and the remarkably simple Sidewinder heat-seeking missile, which remains to this day the most successful missile in actual air combat – as we saw recently in Lebanon and the Falklands.

Implication

Select or develop weapons that are:

- Small
- Quick to move
- Hard to detect
- Quick to kill
- Reliable
- Affordable in mass

What does this new approach imply for actual tanks, guns, ships and aircraft? We are prepared to address each of these areas in specific detail, but the general picture is clear: We should be looking for weapons that are small and hard-to-find, reliable and easy to maintain in combat, highly agile and quick to kill, and cheap enough that we can afford large numbers.

Using these ideas we can select or develop hardware that is, weapon for weapon, better than the Soviets' and that simultaneously permits us to match or outproduce them in numbers.

Can we win wars and preserve consensus?

Yes!

We believe that, if we have the will to fundamentally change the way the Department of Defense approaches people, strategy and tactics, and hardware, there is no question that our military can win wars and maintain strong popular support for defense over the long haul.

We can reform.

Will we?

We understand that achieving real reform will be neither easy nor painless. Further, we understand that no country has yet achieved military reform without a major military disaster.

Nevertheless, we are committed to the idea that there has to be a better way to reform inadequate defenses – we want the United States to be the first country in history to achieve reform without defeat.