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**Discussion following Lecture**

**on**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**by**

**Lieutenant General Lauris Norstad**

Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

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COLONEL DANSON: General Norstad, you mentioned the three possibilities of relieving the Joint Chiefs from some of their numerous responsibilities and details of their work. One of those was to appoint a deputy in the Joint Chiefs' side such as, let us say, legalizing the Little Chiefs and divorcing them from their departmental duties. But you appeared to think that was not the best alternative. I wonder if you would elaborate on that. It seemed to some of us that perhaps that would be a better alternative.

GENERAL NORSTAD: I don't recall saying that was not a good alternative. I did say there were bugs in it. In my view the answer lies somewhere between tossing the responsibility for the day to day running of the department clearly to the Vice Chief and effectively divorcing the Chief - you have seen the desks of the Chiefs when they come back from an all day session with the Joint Chiefs, all these picayunish papers they have to consider - from all the many papers he must consider, and also divorcing him from the requirement that custom has built up where he has to go every place in the world and make speeches on every occasion. If he could sit down and spend his time at the job, that would be one solution. The other would be to have a deputy or legalize the Little Chiefs. Perhaps the real solution would fall somewhere between.

I was talking to General Bull about this matter and I think perhaps the Army system may work out to be a very close approximation to that deputy

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problem. They have a deputy, General Gruenther, who, as I understand it, does not command an empire. In the Air Force I have an empire. I have responsibility for many activities which are responsible to me directly. Theoretically I should be tied down with the administration of it, but that doesn't appeal to me particularly. It doesn't permit me to do what I think is my job. I have unburdened myself to a considerable extent by passing that to my deputy who really runs my establishment, and that frees me considerably.

I think that is a very reasonable alternative, and I think the problem of really divorcing the Chiefs from the day to day work is a very difficult one. I think you might get agreement that that is the way to do it, but I doubt very much if they could carry it out. Perhaps the alternative is to have deputies who can act for them. We do, in fact, as you know, act for and in the name of the Chiefs on anything we consider to be within our competence.

I don't know if that answers your question or not, but I think that might well be the solution. Right now I lean a little bit to the Army system although I am not thoroughly familiar with how it is working out. If you divorce that man from any current problems and just let him work on JCS work, then that might well be the solution.

ADMIRAL DYER: I was wondering if that wouldn't lead to considerable difficulties because the civilian Secretaries feel they want to look to one man in regard to all the details within their department. If you divorce the Chief from the day to day happenings, then the Secretary really has to look to a number two man and that is a real difficulty.

GENERAL NORSTAD: You might be able to train them, but it might be a little difficult to do it.

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ADMIRAL DYER: They change so fast that it would be hard to train them.

GENERAL NORSTAD: That would be an argument in favor of a deputy. Even without any legal basis we could have a type of deputy system which would work more or less effectively, depending upon the personal relationship. It depends almost entirely on the relationship between the Chief and the man who is acting for him. If that relationship is right, then it works out very effectively. I think it works out very effectively in other departments of the Government. If the relationship isn't quite right it will fall apart since it has no basis in law or any recognized system. To be fully effective, it should be recognized.

COLONEL KOENEMAN: (ICAF) A politician is said to be a master of compromise, but not so the military minds. It would be interesting to get your further views as to the mental processes of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their activities. Specifically they wear two hats, and with one hat presumably they represent the specific interest of their particular department, and with the other interests submerge perhaps in the larger national interest, and presumably the two are not necessarily always synonymous. Would you care to give your ideas of the extent to which they should bring to the Joint Chiefs of Staff the departmental point of view, and the extent to which they should bring the submerged point of view, and how the two can be reconciled without giving them nervous prostration?

GENERAL NORSTAD: Theoretically the Joint Chiefs, when they put on their Joint Chiefs' hat should forget their Service viewpoint and work and consider only the over-all problem and the over-all good. That is a very

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difficult task to assign any human being. The most encouraging thing, I think, is the fact that the Chiefs can do that to the extent that they can. In the first place, it calls for considerable knowledge of the subject. It is only on the basis of knowledge that they can be free to depart from a position or line that somebody has cooked up and prepared for them. So, you have got to have a lot of knowledge. That goes back to the discussion we had before as to some means of giving them the opportunity to get into things enough so they have in their own right adequate knowledge and have given adequate thought to the facts involved so they are free to change a position in the light of new facts.

The other quality called for is a high degree of courage. I don't know how many of you people have sat at the head of a section or division and had your people come in and say, "This is the position." I have had people come in and tell me, and I in turn have told my chief, a succession of chiefs, that there is no question about it - this is the answer. Perhaps the toughest thing in the world is to say, "That is the answer from your standpoint, but there are other things with which you are not familiar that to my mind changes it and I am not going to go along with it." It is even more difficult to go to a meeting, as the Chiefs go with their colleagues, or as you do all the way down. You go in with some background - you have to study the problem - and the background usually indicates that such and such is a sound position. Then, you come back from that meeting having completely reversed that thought. There is no substitute for the personal qualities which permit a man to acquire divergent knowledge so he can make changes and adjustments, and the personal qualities that give him the courage to depart from a position that everybody

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else in his color suit thinks is a sound position. But the only way you can come to a sound solution, the only way the Chiefs or, for that matter, anybody on any other level can arrive at sound solutions, is by doing just that on occasions.

I would like to go back again and say these Chiefs - and I am particularly impressed with the present Chiefs' organization - show a great willingness. In the first place, I think they have the ability to think for themselves, even if they are pressed for time in considering all the facts. All of them have a very quick grasp, and they get things fast. They are capable of thinking and willing to think for themselves. Sometimes I don't know how they can do it when they are so pushed around and constantly tired. Everyone of them has demonstrated that he has courage to change a position, that he has the courage to lead instead of follow on. That is an absolute essential and a quality we must expect in Chiefs. They will never work unless they have that quality.

COLONEL KING: (ICAF) Dean Acheson and several others wrote a minority report to that part of the Hoover Committee, the Eberstadt Committee Report on the organization of the Armed Forces, wherein they advocated quite strongly and with considerable interest when you read it, the idea of an over-all Joint Chiefs of Staff and not a chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as we have now - but a definite and positive Chief of Staff, you might say a commander. When you read that it is quite interesting. It seems to have merit but I won't form any opinion myself as to whether that is a sound alternative which so far you haven't mentioned, but I would like to have your opinion on it.

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GENERAL NORSTAD: I thought my opinion on that subject was well established. I thought originally that there should be a military Chief of Staff. All things being equal, I think that is a very sound solution. I think we could be assured year in and year out of better solutions, and faster solutions, with a Chief of Staff. I believe the chairman system can work. As proof of that, I point to the present organization. The present organization is working effectively. I would at this time advocate no change in that system. I think you have this, you should support it, and I think with support it can be as effective as a Chief of Staff. I would advocate no change. I believe that for my idea of organization that in the first instance the Chief of Staff, in the commonly accepted definition of the Chief of Staff, would have been the answer. I would not advocate it at this time.

COLONEL KEISEY: One of the questions which seems to arise continually is the problem of a central planning staff, a central operating staff. The Air Force has a peculiar situation, obviously, with global warfare, and based on your experience could you give us a current evaluation of the advisability or feasibility of central operational control from the higher headquarters versus operational control at lower levels and coordination in the central planning group?

GENERAL NORSTAD: I gather you are talking about the Joint Staff organization as opposed to the departmental organization. The Air Force, as you know, decentralized both the planning and operations perhaps to a larger extent than they do in the other two Services. The reason for that is pretty obvious. Our organization permits and perhaps dictates that type of system with the principal functional commands. We can hand out broad directives, and

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the planning within those directives can be done by Strategic Air Command, Continental Air Command, and so on. In the joint organization that is a subject that has been given some discussion, particularly recently.

In connection with the functional organization in an emergency, the alternative, - not quite an alternative but the principal element of the alternative - is the executive agent system. I think the executive agent system, as working, is adequate now. I would think the recognized tendency, not for the future, but the tendency now, is for the Joint Staff to become more operational. I think in the event of an emergency it might well become an operational agency of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I frankly don't have a firm opinion at this time as to whether or not it should. I think the tendency would be toward the Joint Staff operating more as an operational staff for the Chiefs in the event of an emergency. There are great stresses and strains even in peacetime, but the executive agent is working, it is adequate. But I believe the tendency would be toward that. Although the pros and cons are currently being discussed, I do not have a firm opinion that it should be an operational staff. There are some aspects of it which in the case of an emergency would appear inescapable, and some of us question whether or not it should be far more operational than it is now.

CAPTAIN HAYES: (ICAF) General, could I ask your comments on a suggestion that we put an additional box on the Defense Organization Chart on the level of the military departments. Let us call it the Armed Services and assign all roles and missions to the Armed Services in this particular box, leaving the departments only the support functions. The reason I suggest that is because that seems to be the case in the Navy now; the operating forces are

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separate from the shore establishments, and within the fleets themselves the task force is separated from the battalion commanders.

GENERAL NORSTAD: Your suggestion is, as I understand it, that you have the combat elements.

CAPTAIN HAYES: You have the combat elements to whom are assigned all roles and missions, and the departments are only support agencies.

GENERAL NORSTAD: I have never given that any thought. My off-the-cuff view would be that that would involve problems of relationships that would be very difficult. We had a similar system in the Air Force in the GHQ Air Force, and I think it was similar to what you have in mind. It was responsible for all the operating elements of the Air Force. The so-called Chief was in a supporting role. His responsibility was to support the combat elements, and it introduced very serious problems of relationship. As I remember - I happened to be in that headquarters - we kept that until the war started and then we folded it. I have not given it enough thought to have an opinion on it. I would say, off the cuff, there would be serious problems of relationship.

CAPTAIN LINNEAVER: (ICAF) General you had much to do with this present unification about which we read in the papers, and apparently you are quite content with your present organization. My question is this: Is this present unification we have now that compromise that you said results when no one can make a decision, or was that forced upon us by Congress?

GENERAL NORSTAD: It would help me in the first instance to know, when you mention my responsibility, whether you were giving me credit or blame. I think it is fair to give me either one as a matter of fact.

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The original Security Act of 1947 involved acceptance on both sides of some things that were not considered desirable. It involved the deletion on both sides of things they thought were desirable. I think the agreement between the Services represented a reasonable combination of views at that particular time. It didn't go as far as some people wanted it to go in some aspects, and it went farther in others. However, I think it represented a reasonable combination of views. I don't believe either side accepted things they considered undesirable; I don't think either side accepted anything they thought was unsound. There are different views as to how effectively this has worked, and perhaps there is room for these views. It is my judgment that it is working. I think that is the generally accepted view. I believe it can work, and I believe it will work. I think that after two years with only minor modifications made in it, that that would indicate it was no compromise which was unsound. I took exception to some parts of it, and I am sure that others took exception to some parts of it, but I was considering the over-all objective. I freely accepted the law as it was agreed upon, and I accepted it as being reasonable and sound. In other words, the things I didn't want to see in there were undesirable in my opinion and not unsound.

**GENERAL WEYLAND:** General Horstad, when we asked you to appear on this platform following Admiral Struble and General Gruenther, we realized we were kind of putting you on the spot, especially when we asked you to talk on the same general topic that they were to talk on. However, in giving us your philosophy on the organization and the relationships between the several Services, you have covered a field that is extremely valuable to both colleges.

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On behalf of the two Commandants, thank you for coming down and giving us of your time.

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