

By **PATRICK CRONIN**
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Deploying Soft Power

Restructured, Larger Civilian Force Needed for Crises

Yet again, a senior military official has argued that “U.S. foreign policy is still too dominated by the military.” Yet again, the defense community has cried out for more robust diplomacy and development and the greater use of “soft power” — the ability to attract and persuade rather than force.

The most recent plea came March 3 from U.S. Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, America’s highest-ranking military officer, in a speech at Kansas State University. Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, echoed other uniformed officers such as Gen. David Petraeus and Adm. James Stavridis, as well as civilian leaders such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who made a similar case at Kansas State three years ago.

Despite this unprecedented commitment to soft power, the U.S. government still lacks the ability to translate words into action. America remains strangely ill-equipped to combine hard power and soft power. The U.S. military filled this void over the last nine years while fighting two wars, but it is time to fix what is broken. Unless the U.S. government strengthens its diplomatic, informational and economic tools of power, this admirable new com-

mitment to soft power will fail.

A key challenge is to integrate the elements of power consistently, and not just in Washington strategy sessions but also overseas. We offer four steps forward:

■ We need to create a fund that supports surging our civilian work force into conflict zones. Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., the ranking minority member, have made clear that a civilian surge is one of the prerequisites for success in Afghanistan. Since Pentagon officials agree, it’s time to put our money where our mouths are by using Defense Department money to create a fund for surging our civilian work force in stabilization missions and other complex contingencies.

■ We need to create civilian-led equivalents of military combatant commands that can unify our diplomatic, development, public engagement and defense efforts. The military has taken on new development and public diplomacy missions because it has the ability to integrate these tools, the operational capacity to use them and a broad regional focus — but

it is neither enthusiastic nor best-positioned to carry out these tasks.

Washington-based agencies focus on formulating and coordinating policy, not implementation. That step must occur in the field. This does not necessarily mean simply placing a civilian on top of an existing military command, such as U.S. Africa Command, where a civilian is a prominent deputy. It may mean creating regional or subregional hubs, regional equivalents of embassy country teams, that enable U.S. agencies to integrate diplomacy, development, public engagement and defense more effectively.

■ We need a new type of interagency professional, expert in the tradecraft of one agency but with vast networks across parochial governmental departments. We envision a national security cadre in which defense, diplomacy and development agencies create career paths of experts skilled in managing complex global activities. Hybrid challenges require hybrid professionals. With expertise in interagency strategy, planning and implementation, this network of managers would create a vital capacity to combine

soft and hard power effectively.

■ We need a larger civilian expeditionary force to respond to international crises when necessary. The failure of the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development to send more than 1,000 civilians to Afghanistan in less than one year to support President Barack Obama’s new strategy and a force growing to 100,000 troops illustrates the challenge.

The government’s Civilian Response Corps has set a relatively meager goal of 250 active civilians who can deploy into stabilization and reconstruction missions. Unfortunately, this is insufficient for today’s operational needs and tomorrow’s possible contingencies. Without a small but permanent civilian capacity, even the most brilliant strategy that integrates diplomacy, development and defense cannot bear fruit.

National security leaders should have no illusions that this will be easy. A first step to wielding soft power well is to recognize not just its potential but also its limits. Using soft power is hard. It relies on persuasion, negotiation, attraction and public engagement — the effects of

which are rarely visible or swift.

With coercion, change is quick, but unintended consequences can linger. For this reason, Mullen did something unpopular among many in uniform: He called for limited, restrained, precise uses of force. Victory demands looking past the immediate killing of enemies, which can engender deep wells of anti-Americanism.

Soft power is different. Though the long-term effects can be pivotal, there is no instant gratification. Since it is complicated to establish a cause, it can be hard to know when soft power is working.

Strategy is one thing. Executing it is another. Though a unique coalition of military and civilian leaders now support using American soft power more effectively, we need to move urgently from strategy to action and permanently build the civilian capacity to wield soft power well. The alternative to soft power is not only less effective hard power, but less power, period. ■

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Real Acquisition Reform Flows From Truth

The general press seriously misreported the context and history of Northrop Grumman’s decision not to compete for the multibillion-dollar U.S. Air



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Force aerial tanker plane acquisition. I disagree with “experts” and politicians whose comments were quoted therein.

Obviously, true acquisition reform depends on an informed public, in the hope that politicians will be

driven to act more like statesmen. The Obama administration should receive support for the true change that it expressly states is its core objective and is pursuing here. The press should correct the record.

The decades of acquisition reform, driven by the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations,

are rife with contract failures, mis-spent funds, nonperforming systems and a decimated civil service work force. It is evident that Defense Secretary Robert Gates and President Barack Obama have significantly improved upon the past, especially in the aerial tanker case.

Gates insisted on resisting congressional pressure to allow a dual award that would split contract quantities between Boeing and Northrop. His words at the Air War College were: “over my dead body.” Two baselines would mean lower quantities for each firm and dual logistics tails, resulting in higher unit prices/support costs and overall ineffectiveness. Apparently, Gates saw the aerial tanker as a military requirement and not one for pork. Implicitly, the president supported this view, and courageously.

In a July 13, 2009, *Defense News* op-ed, I wrote that aircraft size is the key factor determining the operating characteristics and payload of this system. Boeing never got a clear answer earlier when it asked about size, but both firms have it now. The Air Force has not

changed its requirements. Northrop’s decision not to compete is because it knows it can’t beat the smaller Boeing 767. This is the most valid reason not to compete. Doing otherwise would be wasteful and likely to lead to being questioned by the Northrop board of directors.

Contract award protests cost financial and political capital, which are not spent when there’s nothing protest-able. Northrop presumed Boeing will propose its airframe, as it did in the last competition.

Northrop’s last proposal was unacceptable because it failed to agree to a required date to establish a depot-level maintenance facility. Boeing didn’t have the award nullified; it protested the award to the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The GAO independently found the award was in error because, without that date agreement, Northrop’s proposal was simply ineligible for award.

Further, the GAO also found evidence that the Air Force and Northrop were both aware of and discussed this ineligibility prior to the award; but nonetheless, the

award was made to Northrop.

Both then were concerned that Northrop couldn’t satisfy that mandatory Air Force requirement, but now they can expect to be found out.

Political support can’t overcome this black-and-white matter. Surely, if Northrop failed to submit a responsive proposal originally, that same proposal would fail again. How would EADS, Northrop’s subcontractor before, if it competes or teams again, suddenly now meet that requirement?

The most fundamental truth is the need for truth itself concerning military acquisition; most critically by government officials but also by others. With comprehensive and complete coverage in the media, that objective can be obtained.

In addition to the obvious, Defense industry analysts have questioned how profitable the tanker contract would be, particularly with respect to the Pentagon’s penchant for fixed pricing when design and testing of their aircraft have not been completed.

The 767 program began in 1978, with Boeing’s Web site claiming

973 aircraft delivered to date in various configurations. So development costs certainly have been recovered, profitability is expected by all concerned, design is stable and testing is over — except for modifications such as for U.S. Air Force use as a tanker and IT upgrades.

Boeing has already delivered four of these planes in tanker configurations to Japan’s Air Force, and is under contract to supply four more to the Italian military. Boeing seems to know how to make money, and its stock has done well since the news. Northrop’s expressions of concern are kind, but I smell a sour grape aroma on its corporate breath.

When officials knowingly push a noncompetitive firm to bid, or award contracts based on nonresponsive proposals, this is not reform; it is economic lunacy or political pandering that hobbles military operations and waste defense resources. True reform demands truth-telling — a reform indeed. The Air Force desperately needs the plane, and could have had it well before now. ■