TRANSPORTION TOPIC:
Critical Management Controls

TASK: Create and sustain a true team relationship with senior subordinate leaders that ensures the Department’s senior leaders stay on mission. Identify management tools that ensure senior leaders are held accountable, and avoid “going native.”

TASK GROUP:
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ISSUES:

• Building and keeping a senior leadership team united and focused is a constant challenge for the Secretary of Defense.

• Poor utilization of management tools with the Presidentially Appointed – Senate Confirmed Personnel (PAS) may result in these subordinate senior leaders becoming out-of-coordination with the Secretary’s goals and objectives, i.e. “going native.”

IMPORTANCE:

• Hard decisions, particularly when there is overall budgetary pressure, tend to diminish alignment, and increase friction between the Service Secretaries and the Secretary.

• The true senior leadership teaming that exists at the onset of a new administration too often erodes, enabling subordinate leaders to become overly focused on their military Service’s perspectives at the expense of alignment with the Secretary of Defense’s agenda.
Unlike the corporate world, the Secretary doesn’t customarily get to pick his/her entire leadership team
- Corporate Selection/Hires vs. White House appointments

Involving and cultivating alignment of the Secretary’s management team leads to greater organizational effectiveness
- The Secretary’s direct reports throughout the Department need to be aligned and have fully established mutual trust, yet be appropriately decisive within their roles to be effective
- Service Secretaries must support the President and the Defense Secretary first; then manage their military service accordingly

“Title 10” authorities can frustrate efforts to build a unified team
- Military Service objectives potentially running in opposition to the Defense Secretary’s policies
- Congressional pressure can widen the “seams”

CEOs of best-performing corporations measure performance, provide feedback (even when difficult) and rapidly and decisively remove poor performers that hurt the team
- Not doing so can break team confidence, introduce compromise, and create a fractured, splintered team that loses focus on the mission priorities – and risks “going native”
RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Maintain open lines of communication and invest the time with Service Secretaries and other senior leaders to focus on priorities and goals
   a. Aggressively utilize existing governance structures
   b. Consider creating a higher-level executive committee where the members represent the Department and not their Services – and allow Service Secretaries to rely on each other
   c. Conduct one-on-one performance sessions with key senior subordinate leaders – utilize cascading scorecards – publicize outcomes

2. Delegate downward, Title 10 provides significant latitude to prevent the staffs sending lesser actions upward

3. Apply the old verities:
   a. Be decisive
   b. State and reinforce priorities early
   c. Delegate authority, responsibility and accountability early
   d. Establish, communicate, and enforce standards of expected behavior
   e. Make early accountability decisions