



## TRANSITION TOPIC:

# Better Allocating the Secretary's Focus and Time to Drive Performance

**TASK:** Consider how past Secretaries of Defense have allocated their time as a basis of developing options for how the Secretariat-level leadership can better focus on the most strategically important objectives. Recommend how the leadership can create and stick to a management agenda that sustains that focus.

## **TASK GROUP:**

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## **ISSUE:**

- Successful management of the Department of Defense requires that the Secretary maintain focus on the right objectives. It is imperative to set priorities and establish a management agenda that articulates priorities and holds the lower organizations and management accountable.

## **IMPORTANCE:**

- The next Secretary will need a management agenda which is focused on addressing key strategic priorities as the time and resources to do everything will not be available
- Early alignment with key internal and external stakeholders on key priorities requires a clear understanding of trade space
- The current financial constraints will require faster and more targeted decision making. The next Secretary must create a high-performing, well run management team synchronized to his objectives, so he can be proactive vice reactive on those strategically important objectives



## DISCUSSION:

- Previous Secretaries have commented that there is insufficient time to be proactive or focus on long term strategic issues. The majority of their day was consumed by interagency or internal meetings reacting to events that have already occurred, as compared to an CEO who spends the majority of his time being proactive on future strategic issues. Those that were successful focused on a few major objectives and were able to get stakeholders buy-in.
- Previous Secretaries found that one of the most difficult tasks in government was to marshal the ideas and interests of the various components of the defense community in order to build a consensus on policy. Those that were successful found that they could use incentives to get what they wanted and force trade-offs, without infringing on autonomy of execution.
- At least one former SECDEF saw his task as exercising civilian control for the Commander in Chief by reserving the right to get into anything and issuing orders. Many others saw their role through the prism of their experience, whether in industry and government, which would ultimately influence how they would advance their management agenda. However, what is consistent is agreement that cohesive alignment of budgets with priorities, and an ability to stay focused on a few critical objectives while building stakeholder consensus, are the keys to effectiveness.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Focus on a few key objectives and harmonize those priorities with stakeholders. Provide management attention early and consistently.**
  - a. Identify trade space within the major budget categories ( i.e., personnel/operations and maintenance/research and development/and procurement) and use that to obtain and leverage mutual cooperation with key internal and external stakeholders
  - b. Clearly communicate expectations to the senior civilian appointees, link objectives to outcomes and allocate time to monitor performance.
- 2. Engage the military and civilian leaders, including CJCS and COCOM Commanders on strategic operational matters to better align key objectives and provide a force multiplier to the Secretary.**
  - a. Leverage the expertise and forums available to these entities to advance key management objectives.
- 3. Support strategic priorities by aligning management attention and major budget items.**
  - a. Issue strategic planning guidance that supports key management objectives and drive implementation decisions down to Tier II and lower.
  - b. Identify core management systems and processes and use them to provide important budget and management data.