

**Statement of John F. Tierney
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives**

**“National Security, Interagency Collaboration,
and Lessons from SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM”**

As Prepared for Distribution

July 28, 2010

Good afternoon and thank you all for being here. Today, the Subcommittee continues its oversight of the agencies charged with protecting U.S. national security interests and their ability to communicate and collaborate with each other.

In 1945, following the end of World War II, President Truman sent a message to Congress recommending the establishment of a Department of Defense to combine and coordinate the different military branches in order to better face the challenges of the future. He wrote, “If there is ever going to be another global conflict . . . [o]ur combat forces must work together in one team as they have never been required to work together in the past.” He urged Congress to “take stock, to discard obsolete organizational forms and to provide for the future the soundest, the most effective and the most economical kind of structure for our armed forces of which this most powerful Nation is capable.” Congress agreed, and in 1947 President Truman signed the National Security Act.

Similar words could be spoken today. The threats and challenges currently facing our country are increasingly complex: terrorism, drug violence, piracy, human trafficking, and the potential for nuclear proliferation, to name a few, cut across the traditional lines between diplomacy, development, and defense. As the problems become more multifaceted, so too must our solutions. Terrorist and criminal organizations grow and flourish in weak and unstable countries, and effectively countering those organizations requires more than military might. Justice sector reform, police training, anticorruption efforts, public health campaigns, and economic development programs are all necessary to routing out and neutralizing those who would do us harm. This whole-of-government approach requires the skills and expertise of the full range of federal agencies.

Over the last two congresses, this Subcommittee has held numerous hearings that demonstrate how interconnected our government must be to effectively promote and safeguard U.S. security interests. In hearings covering topics ranging from transnational drug enterprises to U.S efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan to emerging technologies such as unmanned aerial vehicles, we have heard from witnesses representing the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Commerce, and Justice, as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Not one of these hearings would have presented a complete oversight picture without witnesses from multiple agencies.

Today, we turn our attention to the Department of Defense's regional combatant commands. Specifically, we will hear about the results of two Government Accountability Office studies, one on U.S. Southern Command, or SOUTHCOM, and the other on U.S. Africa Command, or AFRICOM. In 2008, the Department of Defense directed these two commands to include interagency partners in their theater campaign and contingency plans, and both commands have worked to include interagency personnel within the commands themselves. These experiences should prove instructive to continued interagency efforts within the federal government.

There are two different levels at which we must examine this issue. The first is mechanical: are the correct systems and processes in place to facilitate interagency collaboration? We must ask how the State Department's bilateral structure can effectively coordinate with the Defense Department and USAID's regional set ups. We need to examine whether technological systems at different agencies can communicate with each other and whether each agency is making its best effort to share information. We should evaluate whether personnel at each agency understand the cultures and functions of the agencies with which they must work and whether the right incentives exist to encourage collaboration. These basic issues have profound, on-the-ground effects that, if not fully addressed, significantly undermine U.S. missions abroad.

But we must also ask broader policy questions. As threats have changed, the concept of "national security" has broadened. As a result, the Department of Defense has taken on an expanding role in areas that have traditionally been allocated to the State Department and USAID, as well as others. We must work to find the right balance between the agencies and make sure that funding streams and personnel numbers reflect that balance. Failure to strike the right balance has consequences. For example, AFRICOM's 2008 rollout sent a message that the military would take the lead on all U.S. activities in Africa, which angered governments throughout the continent. We must ensure that the right agency takes the lead on each effort – that diplomacy is led by diplomats, that development projects are designed and implemented by development experts, and that military operations are planned and coordinated by the military.

Over 60 years ago, President Truman foresaw the challenges we confront today. He argued that "[w]e should adopt the organizational structure best suited to fostering coordination between the military and the remainder of the Government." I believe it is time that we follow his advice.