

TRANSCRIPT

Live Web Chat with the Authors of *Sustainable Pre-eminence: Reforming the U.S. Military at a Time of Strategic Change*



Center for a
New American
Security
Fifth Anniversary

Live Web Chat with the Authors of *Sustainable Pre-eminence: Reforming the U.S. Military at a Time of Strategic Change*

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May 29, 2012
2:00-3:30 p.m.

(START)

Comment by Center for a New American Security on May 29, 2012 - 1:39pm

Welcome to our online chat with the authors of *Sustainable Pre-eminence*. Add your comment below to join the conversation.

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Comment by Jason Turner on May 29, 2012 - 1:58pm

How much more important do you foresee the Joint Foreign Area Officer program becoming to continued U.S. engagement with foreign militaries? Do you have opinions as to whether or not the program should be increased and more billets made available, especially in the Asia-Pacific?

Comment by Dave Barno on May 29, 2012 - 2:03pm

The service's Foreign Area programs will only grow in importance as the US re-balances coming out of ten years at war. The challenge will be sustaining the budgets and service "champions" behind those programs. Budgets are likely to come down across the board - - and FAO programs might inevitably suffer. That would be a grave mistake.

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Comment by Yang Zhang on May 29, 2012 - 2:00pm

I'm Yang Zhang, correspondent of People's Daily. I have two questions for authors. Do you have some comments or expectations on Panetta's trip to Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore with follow-on stops to Vietnam and India in coming days? How do you view the mil-to-mil relationship between the US and China?

Comment by Nora Bensahel on May 29, 2012 - 2:06pm

Secretary Panetta's upcoming trip is consistent with the administration's stated rebalancing towards the Asia-Pacific. Yet there is also room for continued and increased military-to-military engagement with China -- these are not mutually exclusive.

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Comment by Visitor on May 29, 2012 - 2:02pm

The Stryker program seems to have been a rare example of success both in the field and in terms of the procurement system (i.e. no huge cost overruns). Why should production be ended?

Comment by Dave Barno on May 29, 2012 - 2:20pm

As the Army gets smaller it will be giving up Brigade Combat Teams--possibly dropping to as few as 30-35. Right now, the Army does not plan to drop any Stryker units to my knowledge--but does not plan any more Stryker Brigades beyond the current transition of the 3rd Armd Cav Rgt. Basically, the Army pretty much has all the Strykers they need--with only some selected upgrades needed IMO.

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Comment by Paul Capasso on May 29, 2012 - 2:04pm

How do we get Congress to quit playing the "no cuts in my district" game?

Comment by Travis Sharp on May 29, 2012 - 2:18pm

NIMBYism will never disappear in Congress. To overcome it, DOD must present airtight arguments for its decisions, and credible interlocutors who can argue for them. DOD arguments are more likely to be successful as part of a comprehensive reform package, instead of one-off cuts that are easy for individual members of Congress to oppose.

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Comment by Matt Cosner on May 29, 2012 - 2:05pm

It appears to me that the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) program stands at odds with the new strategic guidance in at least four key regards:

- (a) It is not survivable against modern A2 / AD threats;
- (b) Its planned mission modules do not provide credible combat capability;
- (c) It does not have the endurance nor manning needed to operate in the Pacific and;
- (d) It is too expensive to produce in sufficient quantity to offset its many deficiencies.

Your paper recommends that the Navy end the LCS production run in 2017 after procuring 27 ships, and use the LCS for the mine counter measure (MCM) mission. The savings

should then be diverted to buy additional DDG-51 destroyers and Virginia-class submarines. I have three related questions:

1. Your analysis implies that what the Navy requires is an MCM vessel. I agree - but would it not make more sense to truncate the LCS program altogether and simply buy dedicated (and less expensive) minesweepers?
2. What role do the 27 LCS fulfill when not conducting MCM? Are they 'presence' vessels – similar to the China Fleet of the 1920s and 30s? If so, this strikes me as a very incapable, vulnerable, and expensive means to show the flag.
3. Should the Navy consider an 'alternative' small surface combatant? My contention is that the 'Pacific Pivot' drives the need for a modern frigate – a long-legged, survivable, multi-purpose vessel which is more capable than the LCS, but less expensive and capable than a DDG-51 - but I would be interested in your views.

Comment by Dave Barno on May 29, 2012 - 2:24pm

Remember that the LCS is a multi-mission platform, so it can be used for more than just Mine Clearing -- it has utility in counter-piracy, counter-drug and forward presence in many parts of the world. The Navy does not need 55 of these type ships, but about half that number -- rather than starting over to create a new frigate-like platform -- makes sense to us. Given where we are at this juncture.

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Comment by Frederick Ferrer on May 29, 2012 - 2:08pm

Isn't saying, "DOD must maintain America's military preeminence but spend less on defense by operating more efficiently and effectively," the same thing as the Clinton-era "do more with less" mantra in the mid-90's drawdown? If not, please explain the main differences.

Comment by Nora Bensahel on May 29, 2012 - 2:21pm

Our recommendations aren't the same thing as doing more with less. We're recommending that DOD fundamentally reshape the way that it does things in order to cut out unnecessary repetition, duplication, and inefficiencies. For example, the 1990s defense drawdown cut

many active-duty military positions, but did not cut military headquarters, facilities, and civilians in the same proportions. That doesn't make sense going forward.

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Comment by Frederick Ferrer on May 29, 2012 - 2:11pm

How important is the upcoming Presidential election in determining if we follow the European-form of national security or maintaining our pre-eminence as the world's most powerful military force?

Comment by Nora Bensahel on May 29, 2012 - 2:38pm

Whoever wins the presidential election will face significant fiscal constraints in many areas, including defense. We argue that the United States can – and must – retain military preeminence *while* spending less on defense. Our report highlights many ways in which this can occur, such as reshaping service roles and missions to promote greater jointness and interdependence. Such measures can improve military effectiveness while simultaneously saving money.

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Comment by Visitor on May 29, 2012 - 2:11pm

1. Can you link some of your recommendations to industrial base risks? Where can the U.S. take significant risk with the DIB and we can't it take risks

2. Your recommendations appear to rest heavily on a presumption of U.S. defense technology superiority and that may be questionable in 2015-2025 given gains that China and other developing countries are making, coupled with erosion of U.S. higher education programs in defense critical areas. Do your recommendations still stand if China evidences faster progress on defense technologies?

3. Comment please on the experience of the IDF in southern Lebanon in 2006 and how that influenced--or did not influence your views on heavy armor and air power.

Comment by Travis Sharp on May 29, 2012 - 2:27pm

The health of the DIB is a serious concern. Throughout the report, we recommend

maintaining steady production of major weapons systems, pursuing exports, investing in robust R&D, and promoting greater dialogue between DOD and industry. We think we can afford to take risk in some next-generations technologies where the United States is already overwhelmingly dominant, in order to reinvest those dollars in leap-ahead technologies (especially unmanned systems) to ensure U.S. military preeminence.

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Comment by Joseph C. Bebel, Col (R), USAF on May 29, 2012 - 2:15pm

Years ago, the USMC put a great deal of effort in to studying ways to render the battlefield unusable. Having been a UN military observer twice in my career, I was interested in this type of technology as a means of stopping conflict in its tracks. Did your research take into account this type of technology? If so, in what way? If not, why not? Thank you.

Comment by Dave Barno on May 29, 2012 - 2:25pm

In regards to your question on USMC unusable battlefield technology, we did not look into specific area denial capabilities that you reference.

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Comment by Paul Capasso on May 29, 2012 - 2:18pm

Service culture manifests itself in a variety of ways and is inherently at odds with the notion of operating in a Joint and integrated fashion. How does DoD effectively bring the services together to create a warfighting synergy to meet the fiscal realities the military faces?

Comment by Dave Barno and Matt Irvine on May 29, 2012 - 2:28pm

Great question! After ten years of war, the military services are incredibly integrated on the front lines. Part of what we are trying to do is bring the battlefield joint force back to the services' peacetime organizational structures -- such as creating standing joint headquarters from service headquarters and requiring services to be more dependent on each other for military operations (for example tactical airlift from the USAF shared by all).

Comment by Nora Bensahel and Travis Sharp on May 29, 2012 - 2:44pm

More on service cultures: The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs will play a critical role in pushing the services to pursue more integrated plans and capabilities rather than single-service solutions. We recommend that OSD and the Chairman and Vice

Chairman create red teams that can provide a more independent perspective on requirements, programs, and plans, to balance the service input they already receive.

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Comment by Paul Capasso on May 29, 2012 - 2:28pm

How to balance DoDs cybersecurity efforts with other policy priorities and scarce resources?

Comment by Dave Barno and Matt Irvine on May 29, 2012 - 2:36pm

DOD is increasingly investing large amounts in the Cyber mission. These increases are likely to continue, but it is important to recognize the majority of cyber vulnerabilities and capabilities exist outside of DOD itself. Therefore, one of the challenges for the nation is to find ways to creatively use DOD cyber capabilities to help defend and protect these much broader societal cyber vulnerabilities. The legal, practical and oversight challenges to bridge this gap however are truly immense.

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Comment by Alyssa on May 29, 2012 - 2:29pm

Can you speak to the effects of defense sequestration and how this may influence the findings of your report? Do you believe these cuts can be avoided?

Comment by Dave Barno on May 29, 2012 - 2:41pm

We postulated what the US military might look like under four different scenarios in our October 2011 report "Hard Choices" -- to include a sequestration scenario. We found that military would be so reduced as to threaten the long-standing US strategy of global engagement and would be very high risk for the nation's interests. Sequestration as it is currently structured would have a dramatic, painful and un-prioritized effect on the military services' spending, and would actually be worse than the worst scenario we postulated last fall. That said, I would personally handicap the prospects as 49% it will happen, 51% that it will not -- a very risky calculus. I think it will likely ultimately be delayed, but that in the end the cuts will go much deeper than currently planned at \$487B over ten years (pre-sequestration DoD current plans).

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Comment by Paul Capasso on May 29, 2012 - 2:49pm

As the world's predominant military force, the United States faces a significant challenge in responding to China's rising power and influence. Have we "awakened the sleeping dragon" with our new defense strategy?

Comment by Travis Sharp on May 29, 2012 - 2:56pm

China's behavior is being driven by its growing prosperity and its desire to protect its national interests, not the U.S. defense strategy. While China is monitoring U.S. military decisions closely, it is not simply reacting to what the United States does. The United States must continue to strike the right balance between regional strength and regional cooperation.

Comment by Paul Capasso on May 29, 2012 - 3:01pm

On China-- a quote by Sun Tzu: "Be extremely subtle, even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious, even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of the opponent's fate. "

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Comment by jfunderburke on May 29, 2012 - 2:51pm

Thanks for packaging this report. It is full with transformational ideas that I've heard bantered about within DoD before, specifically, within the Army. Hopefully, the Army can move from idea generation to executing a much needed transformation, but I'm not hopeful given the realities of politics, service rivalries, and a large government bureaucracies. How would you recommend the Army approach the beginnings of the transformation you recommend in the report?

Comment by Dave Barno on May 29, 2012 - 3:00pm

Tough question! For the Army to undertake a true transformation, it will need to create deep "buy in" among the junior and mid-grade officers and NCOs who have borne the brunt of the last ten years of war. If the Army loses this generation by not allowing them to take an active role in helping redesign this next Army, it will be unprepared for the next war. I would suggest a ground-breaking initiative to pull in the best ideas of this younger cohort

across the Army, and generate a service-wide debate to really get all the talent in the ranks involved in this important discussion.

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Comment by jfunderburke on May 29, 2012 - 2:59pm

Is sustaining pre-eminence in the world necessary to achieve our strategic initiatives as they are outlined today? If so, where does it leave our allies?

Comment by Nora Bensahel on May 29, 2012 - 3:09pm

We do believe that U.S. military preeminence is necessary to preserve the current open, rule-based international system, which has been underwritten by U.S. military preeminence since 1945. That system will not necessarily sustain itself without a leading U.S. role. The United States will always pursue close relationships with allies and partners and prefer to fight alongside those allies and partners in wartime. There are some questions, however, about the military capabilities that other countries will be able to maintain in the future, given their own shrinking defense budgets. The United States must maintain a robust program of international partnership and interoperability initiatives to ensure effective continued cooperation.

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Comment by Center for a New American Security on May 29, 2012 - 3:27pm

CNAS: Thank you for joining us! A transcript of the Sustainable Pre-eminence online chat will be posted on this web page in the next few days. Report co-authors LTG Barno and Dr. Bensahel will also discuss this report at the CNAS annual conference on Wednesday, June 13 during a session on Responsible Defense in a Changing World. Learn more about the conference and register here: www.cnas.org/cnas2012. The conference will also be webcast live at www.cnas.org/live starting at 8:45 a.m. EDT on June 13.

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