
Testimony of General Michael Hagee United States Marine Corps (Retired)

[The following are excerpts of the testimony of General Michael Hagee, former Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, presented before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, March 18, 2009.]

You are taking on a most important task, and I appreciate the opportunity to share my views on the need to “strike the appropriate balance” in our national security policy and in provision of foreign assistance.

I believe the balance the Committee is looking for is in the application of “smart power”, an approach that ensures that we have strong investments in global development and diplomacy alongside a strong defense. For the United States to be an effective world leader, and to keep our country safe and secure, we must balance all of the tools of our national power, military and non-military.

Mr. Chairman, I think of smart power as the strategic triad of the 21st century—the integrated blend of defense, diplomacy, and development. But this strategic approach will only be effective if all three smart power pillars are coherent, coordinated, and adequately resourced. While the Department of Defense rightfully has received strong Congressional support over the years, funding and support for the State Department and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been more problematic. It is time to address the imbalance, both in strategic emphasis and in funding.

I am here today as a member of the National Security Advisory Council for the Center for U.S. Global Engagement and the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign. I am proud to join with nearly fifty retired senior flag and general officers who share a concern about the future of our country and the need to revitalize America’s global leadership. Our allies in this effort include a bipartisan array of some of America’s most distinguished civil servants, Congressional leaders, and Cabinet Secretaries. This coalition also includes major American corporations such as Boeing, Caterpillar, Lockheed Martin, Microsoft, and Pfizer, as well as private voluntary groups such as Mercy Corps, represented here today by my fellow witness, Nancy Lindborg, and hundreds of others such as CARE, Catholic Relief Services, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, and World Vision, to name a few.

Despite our diverse backgrounds, we share a common belief that America is under-investing in the array of tools that are vital to our national security, our economic prosperity, and our moral leadership as a nation.

Now some may wonder why a Marine, an infantryman, a warfighter, would advocate for empowering the DOS, USAID, and our civilian-led engagement overseas. I am here because I have been on the front line of America’s presence in the world, in some of the most difficult security environments; and I know that the U.S. cannot rely on military power alone to keep us safe from terrorism, infectious disease, economic insecurity, and other global threats that recognize no borders. And I know that the military should not do what is best done by civilians.

Mr. Chairman, I have witnessed many of the tough security and global challenges that burden the world today. I have been in nations that have failed to provide the most basic services to their citizens, in areas where tribal and clan divisions threaten unbelievable violence to the innocent. In Somalia, I saw the consequences of poverty and hunger that result in anger, resentment, and desperation. Some

people respond with slow surrender to this hardship, while others look for political conspiracies and/or turn to extremist ideologies or crime to seek blame or retribution for a life of frustration.

When that frustration spills over into armed conflict, the alarms go off; and too often our military is forced into action. We have the strongest and most capable armed forces in the world; yet as this committee knows so well, the military is a blunt instrument to deal with these sorts of challenges. The U.S. military does have its unique strengths: in times of humanitarian crisis, such as during the Asian tsunami in 2004 or the Pakistani earthquake in 2005. We can provide the logistics and organization to [help get] humanitarian aid to those in need; no other organization on this earth can respond as quickly or efficiently. We can break aggression, restore order, maintain security, and save lives. And where our actions are clearly humanitarian in nature, they have been well-regarded by the people we helped and have bolstered America's image overseas.

But the military is not the appropriate tool to reform a government, improve a struggling nation's economic problems, redress political grievances, or create civil society. It is not, nor should it be, a substitute for civilian-led, governmental and non-governmental efforts that address the long-term challenges of helping people gain access to decent health care, education, and jobs.

To be clear, all the military instrument can do is to create the conditions of security and stability that allow the other tools of statecraft—diplomatic and development tools—to be successful. But as my colleague General Zinni has said, when those tools are underfunded, understaffed, and under appreciated, the courageous sacrifice of the men and women in uniform can be wasted. We must match our military might with a mature diplomatic and development effort worthy of the enormous global challenges facing our nation today. We have to take some of the burden off the shoulders of our troops and give them to our civilian counterparts with core competencies in diplomacy and development.

As I look back, we all know how this imbalance came to be. As the funding for the DOS and the development agencies was either flat or declined, going back over many Administrations, the military mission expanded to fill the void. The DOS and USAID has been forced to make do with fewer personnel, more responsibility, less resources, and less flexibility in how to spend those resources.

This has not developed overnight. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Shalikashvili warned years ago:

What we are doing to our diplomatic capabilities is criminal. By slashing them, we are less able to avoid disasters such as Somalia or Kosovo; and, therefore, we will be obliged to use military force still more often.¹

[General Shalikashvili's comments [above] sound remarkably similar to those of Defense Secretary Gates, who said last July 2008 [below]].

In the campaign against terrorist networks and other extremists, we know that direct military force will continue to have a role. But over the long term, we cannot kill or capture our way to victory. What the Pentagon calls "kinetic" operations should be subordinate to measures to promote participation in government, economic programs to spur development, and efforts to address the grievances that often lie at the heart of

¹ Quoted in Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military* (W.W. Norton, 2003), 54.

insurgencies and among the discontented from which the terrorists recruit . . . it has become clear that America's civilian institutions of diplomacy and development have been chronically undermanned and underfunded for far too long—relative to what we traditionally spend on the military and, more important, relative to the responsibilities and challenges our nation has around the world.²

Mr. Chairman, we all know that some believe it is easier to vote for defense spending than for foreign assistance. But it is time to rethink these patterns. We need [to] take a comprehensive approach to promote our national security. Strengthening our development and diplomatic agencies and programs will not only reduce the burden on our troops, but will stimulate economic growth which will increase international demand for U.S. goods and products—and in turn will create American jobs. It is in our nation's self-interest to make a larger investment in global development and poverty reduction.

Clearly, the global financial crisis gives new impetus to action. The World Bank reports that the crisis is driving as many as 53 million more people into poverty as economic growth slows around the world, on top of the 130-155 million people pushed into poverty in 2008 because of soaring food and fuel prices.³ This rise in global poverty and instability is complicating our national security threats well beyond the two wars we are already fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although we have a profound economic crisis and budget pressure, I do not believe that we can wait to modernize and strengthen our foreign assistance programs, to make the best use of American skills for the betterment of the world, and the most effective use of taxpayer dollars. It is time to put smart power to work.

Mr. Chairman, there is growing support for this shift in our global engagement strategy. Over the past two years, over 2000 pages and 500 expert contributors in more than 20 reports have concluded that America needs to strengthen its civilian capacity as a critical part of our foreign policy and national security strategy. From RAND [Corporation] to Brookings, American Enterprise Institute (AEI) to [Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)], the Helping to Enhance the Livelihood of People Around the Globe HELP Commission to the Center for American Progress, a diverse, bipartisan group of experts and institutions agree that many of the security threats facing the United States today cannot be solved by the sole use of military personnel and force. These experts conclude that a shift to a smart power strategy is necessary to improve America's image in the world and make our global engagement efforts more effective.⁴

Among the wide variety of recommendations contained in these studies, seven action areas stand out:

- Formulate a comprehensive national security strategy that clearly articulates the required capacity for ALL elements of national power needed to achieve our national security goals
- Increase substantially funding and resources for civilian-led agencies and programs, especially through USAID and the DOS

2 Secretary Robert Gates, Speech to USGLC (U.S. Global Leadership Campaign) Tribute Dinner, (July 15, 2008), transcript available at the following web site: www.usglc.org.

3 "Topics in Development: Financial Crisis" (World Bank, March 2009), www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/financialcrisis/.

4 "Report on Reports—Putting Smart Power to Work: An Action Agenda for the Obama Administration and the 111th Congress" (Center for U.S. Global Engagement, March 2009), <http://www.usglobalengagement.org/tabid/3667/Default.aspx>.

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- Elevate and streamline the U.S. foreign assistance apparatus to improve policy and program coherence and coordination
 - Reform Congressional involvement and oversight, including revamping the *Foreign Assistance Act* (FAA)
 - Integrate civilian and military instruments to deal with weak and fragile states
 - Rebalance authorities for certain foreign assistance activities currently under the DOD to civilian agencies
 - Strengthen U.S. support for international organizations and other tools of international cooperation

While these reports focus on various tactics to achieve these steps, there is a broad consensus that we need to go beyond the institutional stovepipes of the past and revitalize and rebuild the civilian components of our national security toolbox.

Let me focus on three of these areas in particular. The first is increased funding for our civilian-led foreign affairs agencies and programs. As Secretary Gates admonishes us, our civilian [agencies and programs] have been “undermanned and underfunded” for much too long.⁵ Out of our entire national security budget, over 90 percent goes to defense and less than 7 percent to diplomacy and development. Recently, I joined 46 other senior retired Generals and Flag officers in a letter to President Obama requesting that he submit a robust International Affairs Budget (IAB) request for fiscal year 2010. We are pleased that his request for the IAB included a 9.5 percent increase. I believe that this increase is an important step forward and will provide a critical down payment toward strengthening our diplomatic and development tools. I hope Congress will approve the President’s request.

Second, we must better integrate our civilian and military instruments to deal with weak and fragile states. Both civilian and military capabilities are necessary to respond to the kind of challenges we face in fragile environments; but their respective roles and points of intervention should vary depending on the political and security situation, the scope of the crisis, and the humanitarian needs. As stability and security are assured, the military should be able to withdraw and give civilian agencies the leadership role in providing assistance. However, this can only happen if we give our civilian agencies the resources and capabilities they need to operate effectively in concert with our military. This requires us to invest in building a “civilian surge” capacity that is much more substantial than what State and USAID have today.

Third, we must begin to rebalance authorities for certain foreign assistance activities currently under the Department of Defense to our civilian agencies. In recent years, as much as 25 percent of foreign assistance has been managed by DOD, due to the military’s significantly greater resources, capacity, and flexibility as compared to State and USAID.⁶ We must strike the appropriate balance between civilian and military involvement in certain foreign assistance activities by rebuilding civilian capacity and transferring appropriate authorities, such as those covered under Sections 1206 and 1207 of the *Defense Authorization Act*. This shift cannot and should not happen overnight, but must be phased in gradually and responsibly, as increased civilian capacity permits.

5 Secretary Robert Gates, Speech to USGLC Tribute Dinner (July 15, 2008), transcript available at www.usglc.org.

6 Steve Radelet, Rebecca Schutte, and Paolo Abarcar, “What’s Behind the Recent Declines in U.S. Foreign Assistance” (Center for Global Development, December 2008).

The Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) has been an important tool for the military, allowing for quick response to humanitarian and other foreign assistance needs, like digging wells or fixing bridges, without coming back to Washington each time to get permission. Yet, our military often then turns to the USAID workers or Provincial Reconstruction Teams to implement these projects because they have the necessary expertise. Our ambassadors and civilian Foreign Service Officers should have capacity and authority to allocate funds in the field without coming back to Washington to get permission for each expenditure. It just makes sense to give the funds and decision-making in the hands of those people on the ground who have the best idea of the most urgent needs and how to invest our funds most effectively.

Mr. Chairman, this Committee is poised to take the lead in developing a smart power approach to our nation's national security challenges. It is clear to me that you have strong support from the Executive Branch for legislative action to promote smart power. President Obama, Secretary of Defense Gates, Secretary of State Clinton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mullen, National Security Adviser Jim Jones—all have called for greater balance between civilian and military components of our policy for modernized foreign assistance policies, tools and operations, increased staffing level for State, USAID, and the Peace Corps and higher funding levels. As President Obama said just last week at the National Defense University:

Poverty, disease, the persistence of conflict, and genocide in the 21st century challenge our international alliances, partnerships, and institutions and must call on all of us to re-examine our assumptions. These are the battlefields of the 21st century. These are the challenges that we face. In these struggles the United States of America must succeed, and we will succeed.⁷

There is also bipartisan support from the leadership of previous Administrations. As former Secretary of State Colin Powell said recently:

The President's request for a robust international affairs budget is a smart and necessary investment in strengthening America's civilian capacities for global development assistance and diplomacy, which augment our defense and are vital to our national security and prosperity.⁸

And Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has argued:

Although the complete prevention of conflict is not attainable, the more versatile we are; the more effective we will be. And this argues for a robust military matched by a much stronger and better-financed civilian national security capability . . . There is a vast gap between the Marine Corps and the Peace Corps; and we need to fill that gap with people who are skilled in law enforcement, good governance, economic reconstruction, the art of reconciliation, and the creation of lasting democratic institutions.⁹

As I noted earlier, there is broad support for this rebalancing from those of us who have served in the military—both retired and active duty. Years of experience in Iraq and Afghanistan have underlined what knowledgeable military leaders have known for some time: today's wars, conflicts,

7 President Barack Obama, Remarks at Dedication of Lincoln Hall at National Defense University (March 12, 2009).

8 General Colin Powell, USGLC press release on International Affairs Budget (February 26, 2009), www.usglc.org.

9 Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Remarks at "Preventive Priorities for a New Era, Session I" (Council on Foreign Relations, December 9, 2008), http://www.cfr.org/publication/17961/preventive_priorities_for_a_new_era_session_i.html.

and complex national security issues can only be “won” with the application of ALL elements of national power. And, in most cases, the military element, once the situation is stabilized, is the much less important element. Commanders have also learned that not only do these elements need the right capacities and abilities, but they MUST BE integrated and coordinated. Furthermore, this integration and coordination should not start on the battlefield.

It is my sense that there is no stronger advocate for diplomacy and development in the field than the active duty military. In fact, in a poll last July, the Center for Global Engagement found that over 80 percent of active duty officers’ surveyed say that strengthening non-military tools should be at least equal to strengthening military efforts when it comes to improving America’s ability to address threats to our national security.¹⁰

In after-action reports and strategy exercises conducted by the various Commands around the world, there is a constant theme. We need civilians who know the area; speak the language; bring needed expertise; and, most importantly, have long standing [personal] relationships with local decision makers. These are not skills and assets that can be developed over night. And they should not be abandoned after a short term assignment. Clearly, we need to tap the talent we already have at the State Department and our USG development agencies as well as in our private and voluntary organizations. The insight and real life experience they bring to the table has too often been ignored in the policy process.

Shifting the emphasis of U.S. foreign policy from one that relies heavily on military might to one that elevates the value of diplomacy and development will, indeed, take strong political leadership, a decisive strategy to guide us, and adequate resources and personnel to ensure we are successful. Such leadership and shift in strategy is not without precedent. Over 60 years ago, the nation was exhausted from war and worried that the specter of economic depression might return. Yet when the nation faced a new challenge on the horizon, leaders from the DOS, the services, and Congress came together, carefully analyzed the problem at hand, and developed a strategy to meet the Soviet threat. They began with “measures other than war”; they structured a strategy later known as “containment.” Congress designed and funded the institutions and policies to implement that strategy, from the *National Security Act of 1947* to the Marshall Plan, to the Truman Plan, and the early efforts for post-colonial economic development.

Over the years this Committee wrote the major foreign assistance legislation for our nation [and] supported the State Department, USAID, and the other departments concerned with foreign relations. You and your predecessors authorized a wide number of programs to address the world’s problems.

In the over fifty years that our nation has been at this growing task, our assistance has:

- Created the capacity for millions of people to feed their families through agricultural breakthroughs in crop production and soil conservation
- Contributed to broad based income growth which resulted in demand for American goods and services
- Nearly eradicated river blindness, polio, and smallpox
- Helped war torn nations rebound from civil and ethnic conflict

10 Center for U.S. Global Engagement poll (July 2008), highlights available at www.usglobalengagement.org.

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- Saved millions of lives each year through vaccinations and access to basic health care, access to potable water, and sanitary food preparation education
 - Provided hundreds of thousands of HIV patients with life-saving anti-retroviral treatments

While these are remarkable achievements, we must build on them to lay the foundation for a new era of hope. The *National Security Act of 1947* is completely inappropriate for our challenges today. We need a new leadership team from all the agencies and departments with overseas impact. These departments, working with the National Security Council (NSC) and the Congress, need to design and implement a new, comprehensive national security strategy to accomplish the following:

- Define and assess the global security challenges facing the United States today
- Set realistic goals
- Provide the resources to achieve those goals

We must understand the threats from movements of tribes and religious extremists as well as the broader conditions of poverty and despair. We must assess the impact of constrained resources on an ever more challenging and unstable world. Designing a strategy to take on insurgent movements, extremist attitudes, the lack of civil society, and good governance requires deep understanding of histories, cultures, and values. It may mean a new alliance system with tribes in addition to states and reviving coalitions with allies who share our values and are prepared to share the burden of world leadership.

Time is of the essence. As we work to get our own economic house in order, we must be able to address the deeper threats in fragile states that can threaten our own security and prosperity. If we are determined to reduce the strain on our troops, respond to the threat of global and political and cultural insurgency, and protect America, we must be prepared to make bold changes.

We need to give the brave men and women of both our military and the civilian diplomatic and development communities the resources they need. We need civilian career paths that include longer tours, in-depth preparation, language competency, and cultural understanding. Specifically, we need substantial personnel increases at State and USAID, large enough to allow for a float so that they can attend combined and joint professional education and training, as we do for our military personnel. I currently co-chair a Defense Science Board Study Group that is addressing how we should change and enhance joint professional military education. This Committee might want to consider the broader need for educational opportunities and how to bring State and USAID officers into a version of this system.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the need is clear; and the broad support is evident—from the President, from the State Department, the Defense Department, and the military in the field, as well as from opinion leaders and experts across the political spectrum. It is time to rethink our investments for a better and safer world. It is time to deploy smart power and increase our support for civilian-led efforts in diplomacy and development. But to achieve this new strategy, which some have referred to as a “whole of government” approach to national security policy, we are going to need a “whole of Congress” response to this challenge. I hope your Committee will form a strategic alliance with the Armed Services Committee, the Defense and State Appropriations Subcommittees, and your Senate counterparts to make smart power a reality. I hope that we see the day soon when Members of Congress see the Defense Authorization, the State Department Authorization, and the *Foreign*

Assistance Act together as vital components of a new strategic, smart power triad for our country's leadership in the world.

Other transcripts of those asked to testify by the Committee: Ms. Nancy Lindborg, President, Mercy Corps; Reuben Brigety, Ph.D., Director of the Sustainable Security Program Center for American Progress Action Fund; and The Honorable Philip L. Christenson, Former Assistant Administrator, United States Agency for International Development can be viewed in their entirety at: <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/111/lin031809.pdf>.