TRANSCRIPT

Event
“Integration of the U.S. Missile Defense Enterprise”

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FEATURING
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Well, good afternoon and welcome to our panel discussion today on integration for the missile defense enterprise. I’m Tom Karako, director of the Missile Defense Project. We’re really happy to have with us two folks from the National Academy of Public Administration, Bill Greenwalt and Roger Kodat, who – to talk to us about their brand-new report on this important subject which was, of course, congressionally mandated.

So we’re going to go through a lot of weeds-y stuff on, I think, you said the managerial geek aspects of the missile defense enterprise. But, you know, before we get to that – and, by the way, really enjoyed chatting with your team during the process of this report. Before we get to that, could you talk to us a little bit about NAPA, the National Academy of Public Administration, and just sort of give us some background on that? Roger, you want to address that?

Yeah, I’d like to. Thanks, Tom. And thanks for all the support that you gave to our study team as we worked through this very busy year on missile defense.

So NAPA sounds like we sell windshield wipers or reds and whites. But the National Academy of Public Administration was founded in 1967 and was given a congressional charter in 1984. And so the Congress does have an opportunity to mandate in law work to us as we’re tantamount to the National Academy of Sciences. But we focus on public administration. How do organizations work more efficiently and effectively? And we were – in this case, we’re nonprofit. We are not government employees. It we are nonpartisan and independent.

And some of those adjectives that I just used are very attractive to organizations that want to have truly an outside view. As the Chinese say, if you want to learn about water don’t ask a fish. So we had an opportunity, in this case, as the National Academy, to do this work. But all of our work is focused on organizations, whether it’s the federal government, the state, or even local government. And this was in truly a very interesting project for NAPA.

Great. Can you tell us a lot about the folks on your team? I think it was about five people or so.

Actually, much more than that. But go ahead, you can talk about your study team. As far as – I chaired the panel. And NAPA has, I don’t know, about 700 or –

A thousand. Nearly 1,000, sir.

Nearly 1,000 fellows. And most of us are either ex-government employees or professors in the public administration department and government
departments, economics departments around the country. And so for each of these studies, NAPA reaches out to have individuals with areas of expertise to have an overarching panel to discuss these issues, and eventually agree on the report. And then NAPA also has, and Roger’s the project director on this, a permanent set of employees who are out there doing the interviews and bringing forward all the data to the panel. And so we had a terrific panel of, you know, Ambassador Westphal, ex-acquisition people. I mean, it was just a really, really good – and in addition to the expert managerial expertise we had on the on the – on the panel – of the project team itself.

Mr. Kodat: Yeah. I was very fortunate to have several senior analysts working with me – John Tucker, Maria Rapauano, Karen Hardy, and James Higgins. So it was truly a group effort. We kept ourselves incredibly busy with the great leadership that we received from Bill and the other fellows that were part of the panel.

Dr. Karako: Well, it’s a great report. It’s an interesting report. And we’re happy you came over to CSIS to do a public rollout about it.

Dr. Greenwalt: Absolutely. Thanks for having us. We really appreciate it. You know, we can get as much as we can get. (Laughter.)

Dr. Karako: You bet.

So let’s talk about the congressional mandate for this. Section 1675 of the FY ’22 NDAA, so that was back in calendar ’21. What was your charge from Congress? What did they ask you to look at?

Dr. Greenwalt: Roger, do you want to?

Mr. Kodat: Yeah. So not much. (Laughter.)

Dr. Greenwalt: Just everything.

Mr. Kodat: (Laughs.) We were invited to, first of all, provide in this report a listing of the roles and responsibilities and the various components of the Department of Defense in the full range of activities connected with missile defense. And with that, it includes I’m looking at setting requirements, acquisition, and including research and development, and then operational sustainment. That was just the first leg under the stool. And the second was to look at those roles and responsibilities for the missile defense – and I’ll double back on the missile threat types – but then to think through, are there gaps in this roles and responsibilities that we should bring to the attention in the report?

And then thirdly, was to think about how can these mission sets be deconflict, if needed. Where is there unnecessary duplication and waste?
And to result in a more efficient operation of the full set of activities in the missile defense enterprise. The fourth thing was to look at a timetable of recommendations. And the fifth is to make administrative and legislative recommendations.

The missile defense, in consultation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense – which was our interface with the DOD – and also in consultation with our panel and with Congress, we concluded together that the missile defense enterprise was to include ballistic hypersonic cruise and UAS or uncrewed aircraft systems. Those four threat types. So we did not look at air and missile defense, as you can see, but rather – and, tongue in cheek – only the four missile threat types. And for the activities that I mentioned already with requirements, setting acquisition, and operational sustainment.

It’s also important to note that this report was to be done on an unclassified basis for 12 months. To that end, it really harkens back to what NAPA is about, which is we’re an organization that looks at how can a complex enterprise become more effective and more efficient in its operation? So being at an unclassified level, we were largely looking at organizational behavior and how an organization’s segments operate together, or not, to have an effective outcome. And that was largely what we focused on.

Dr. Greenwalt: And I think, congressional intent, they essentially wanted to see an independent evaluation. But they also understood some of the inability of some government agencies to actually do this type of evaluation. You know, the – we all love the GAO, but this might – this might be a five-year effort for the GAO. But the National Academy of Public Administration can move a little bit faster, even though we have many, many GAO, you know, evaluators and auditors on our system. But it’s, like, they wanted to do this, they want to do this quickly. They wanted to get it within the legislative cycle. And, you know, so we have tried to deliver.

Dr. Karako: Good. So how did you go about that? You know, what was your methodology and, you know, who’d you talk to? How’d that go?

Mr. Kodat: Well, I’ll just jump in, Bill, for a second, to just say, you know, first of all, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, our principal interface, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Hill were incredibly supportive of this work from day one. And it was a very robust and healthy communication set. But it then led to, with their support and encouragement and guidance, an incredibly valuable and healthy contribution from virtually everyone we reached out to – across combatant commands, the Joint Staff, to the Missile Defense Agency, the Space Development Agency, services, undersecretary for research and engineering, undersecretary for acquisition and sustainment. Really across the board we received positive and excellent sets of contribution to the work that we were doing. We even were invited to Schriever Space Force Base,
which was an eye opener for our team to see the men and women at work who do this work, day-in and day-out.

But we met with more than 150 individuals – four star general, three star general, three star admirals. We had also all levels of services and ranks, as well as civilian personnel, meeting with us. All that said, we were at one point in a conversation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense. And at the end of the project one of our contacts said, I don’t think that an external party doing research on issues in the department, in our experience, had the access to so many senior officials as you’ve had. That was a great credit to the Department of Defense, to be sure, but it also reminded us of the importance of the work that Bill led as the panel chair.

Dr. Karako: Gotcha.

Dr. Greenwalt: And, you know, we were not – this wasn’t an adversarial type of process. This was essentially we were going in and basically trying to document who does what. And so from a methodology standpoint, it’s, here’s where – you know, here’s what the documents say people should be doing. Interviewing. Here’s what they are doing. And then just trying to make some sense out of the various roles and responsibilities that are out there in missile defense enterprise.

Dr. Karako: Well, let’s cut to the chase. What were your main findings with response to these roles and responsibilities? What were your big takeaways?

Dr. Greenwalt: I think the first big takeaway was we actually were able to try to define them. And I think that’s – you know, being putting up that matrix and identifying who does what was, you know, I think the – you know, really to me one of the biggest benefits of this work. And of course, when you look at that roles and responsibilities, well, they’re kind of all over the place. And I’ll let Roger kind of follow up on that, but it’s a very, very disparate number of organizations, of capabilities, of systems that have been developed over the last 50 years that don’t always kind of talk to each other and don’t always work as well as we’d like to see. But go ahead, Roger.

Mr. Kodat: Yeah, it was intriguing at first – and this is not a condescending remark in any way – but it was intriguing at first to ask our counterparts at the department, in a service, in a combat command, or somewhere else: Can you just hand us the roles and responsibilities list that you have? And, trust me, we weren’t being in any way disrespectful in the spirit of the question. But there wasn’t such a list, that we were given anyway. And so we have to turn around and thank our counterparts who reviewed our draft report, did we get this right? Because we then went into a discovery mode, as Bill just mentioned, of trying to discover what are those roles and responsibilities.
To some extent, for hypersonics and ballistic missiles, the Missile Defense Agency has a fair number of responsibilities there. But with respect to cruise and UAS, there’s a different patchwork that was put into place in our report. We hope very much, and trust, that the congressional requesters, as well as the people that we – with whom we worked at DOD, would find those roles and responsibilities helpful. But it was a challenge from the start. And we hope it’s a contribution.

Dr. Karako: Well, I think – I think in some respects, and Roger, you kind of made a joke about at the beginning in terms of the magnitude of the scope of it – what comes to mind for me there is – it’s a comment by Assistant Secretary of Defense John Plumb. I think last year he was testifying and he said, look, missiles have become weapons of choice for our enemies, but even, frankly, for us as well. And so you – I think that kind of speaks to the to the magnitude of all these different entities within DOD trying to get after this.

In that vein, there was something I noticed in the report, that you framed this in terms of what you call the missile defense enterprise. And I remember reading an article back – with my colleague, Wes Rumbaugh – back in 2017, where we said: Hey, we need to begin thinking about all of this stuff as an enterprise. You picked that up. Can you give me a sense, your sense, of the degree to which it is a cohesive enterprise or is this an enterprise in becoming?

Dr. Greenwalt: It’s an enterprise in becoming. And I think, even going back into roles and responsibilities, which is the building blocks of the enterprise, everyone, you know, in this understands what they have to do. And they have a mission and they’re performing admirably, and – but, just as you’re saying, the threat is changing. Missile defense is no longer kind of a boutique issue that we can think about, you know, later. You know, as we’re seeing in Ukraine, and as probably the future of warfare evolves, this is the future. And we need to change the way we think about this. And not from just a boutique, but a an actual, you know, this is –this is what this is defending the nation today. And defending our troops, and whether they’re in Asia, or whether they’re in Europe, or in Africa, or wherever. And we need a systemic way of looking at how we do this mission.

So I think what we’re – it’s evolving – or, let’s say, it needs to evolve to a larger level.

And again, the threats are just not just ballistic missiles, which we’ve talked about for decades. It’s cruise. It’s UAS. It’s an air breathing. It’s coming from the water, maybe coming from space. You know, you all the things that you’ve been looking at for the last several decades is coming to fruition. How are we get to managerially organize to address those threats? And that’s essentially why some – a group like the National Academy of Public Administration can be helpful in doing this.
You know, we are not experts in defense. The first name that comes to your mind when you hear NAPA is not the Department of Defense. Our work is spread out amongst many different agencies. But what we do bring to the table is this expertise in understanding how a complex organization has a cohesive response to a deadly and fast-moving threat. And what we did is look very much – strip away the familiar, strip away this is about missiles, and take a look at complex organizations. Not many analogues to the missile defense enterprise, let’s just agree, thankfully. But to take a look at that and try to discern what are ways to think about the problem it’s addressing as an organization, a complex one.

And all roads lead to a notion that there has to be an integration, and therefore a sense of an enterprise. And if the adversary, I daresay, understands and observes that the United States and the department is looking at this complex threat with so many potential seams that it is a holistic, interoperable organization that when one piece moves the other piece knows about it, that is what formulates an enterprise.

All complex organizations have multiple seams. And the issue is how do you manage those seams? And each individual unit is going to optimize whatever it does, based on itself and its own goals. And the larger enterprise may think that’s OK. That’s good. We want them to work on this mission. But at the same time, there may be greater needs. And some of the seams need to work, and information needs to flow. And for that reason, you need an integrator, or an integrating capability, to work between all of those complex – all the complexity that arises from having so many seams.

Yeah. You know, you both use that word, “seams.” I’m reminded of a smart guy I know, an Army air defender, who wrote an article about the word “seams” and the integration. Which is, look, seams is, it seems, a four-letter word. But seams are the stitching to tie things together, you know? And seams are OK, assuming that they are, in fact, being tied together appropriately. And it sounds like that’s what you’re trying to get after in terms of this. And it’s interesting, the magnitude, again. You’re talking about – the corollary of them being weapons of choice is, as the 2022 Missile Defense Review and subsequent testimony by DASD Hill has said, missile defense is not a boutique problem. It’s a central problem for the Department of Defense.

Absolutely.

Yeah, Tom, I want to add something, if I may really quickly, to what you just said. And Assistant Secretary Hill was very gracious in receiving us as well. Yet another very senior official who spoke into our report. But, you know, the natural tendency on the part of, dare I say, humans is to kind of be tribal.
We like silos. It’s a natural – and in fact, I would argue, if I may, that issues concerning missile defense, it’s good to have the same engineers and the same scientists in the same room talking with each other. That silo is a good thing. Innovation can be creatively spurred and advanced as iron sharpens iron.

So we’re not arguing in the report against a silo. What we’re arguing is something you just referred to, Tom, which is the challenge of then bringing those silos together, which is absolutely the next step. And that’s what we’re calling for. It’s to have someone who’s got the convening authority to bring these brilliant silos together to ensure that it’s an integrated whole.

Dr. Greenwalt: There may be lessons learned, there may be information that needs to flow, there may be just problems that with, you know, a million-dollar software program we could bring information together, and bring two seams together, and actually achieve 3X, 4X, 10X the capability. And those discussions need to happen. And they need to happen not just from a bottom-up standpoint of great ideas flowing up, but from a top-down, how can I be helpful? How can I bring together the tools of the Department of Defense to ensure that we’re achieving more with what we have? And that’s the role of the integrator.

Dr. Karako: So I was talking about that “I” word for a minute here. You know, there’s two different – as I look at this, there’s two competing dictionary definitions of integration. One is to bring things together into a whole, into one. And the other is to have different things working together. And you’ve – what you’ve just said, there are these silos, these different things working together, I think seems to bias towards the latter.

But you’ve taken and, in the report, you again and again talk about the need for more integration. You say the missile defense enterprise is intricate, but it needs to be better integrated. Talk to me about what you mean by integration. What are the things – what level of integration, and what are the things you looked at in the report to bring together, and for what purpose?

Mr. Kodat: Yeah. It doesn’t exist yet. But what we did find is something to learn from the Missile Defense Agency, which was very helpful to us throughout this, amongst others. Was to take a look at how MDA has approached, with their unique flexibilities in their acquisition rules over the several decades looking at ballistics and hypersonics. There was a sense that there was something to learn that could be applied for cruise and UAS that would be urgent from the standpoint of flexibilities and acquisition rules, particularly if you think about UAS and the gestation periods for type four, type five, the large UAS that can carry payloads.
The developments in those technologies are 18 to 24 months, some people talked to us about. So to go through JCIDS process, to find a way to kill that bullet, may be way too slow over time. So the way that we started to think about this, in consultation with senior leaders at the department – several of them – was to think through, is there an MDA lookalike that would be able to have the authority to look at the entire spectrum, not just ballistics and hypersonics but the other two missile threat types, with the notion, as we’ve talked about already, that our adversaries have all four. And so they’re going to choose all four, perhaps, if they decide to pull the trigger. Terrible idea, but nevertheless.

And so, are we with a single view on how do we address those when the time comes? Because, as we all know, there’ll be very little time to respond. And so there’s little, if any, opportunity for mistake or miscommunication across the DOD organization, in this case.

Dr. Greenwalt: An integrator can come with a set of – a tool set. And that tool set could be flexible acquisition authorities, a flexible pot of money to work the seams, a flexible way to start initiatives which essentially is the requirements process. In other words, to, you know, bring forward new ideas quickly. And the reason we went with the integrator idea, I mean, we could just continue on the way we’re doing, kind of an ad hoc approach. But there’s no sense of time urgency here. There’s no sense of – you know, I mean, this is the way the department works. It kind of goes in – incrementally moves forward. You know, there’s your battles between – for budget, for acquisition authority, and so on.

And, quite frankly, the threat is moving faster than the managerial processes can go. And so therefore, you need some entity, some individual or some entity, that can speed these really, really important silos forward, get them to work together, and provide the tools and, frankly, the cover – the political cover – to move forward and to use them. That’s what an integrator is all about. And so missile defense was able to do that for many, many years because it was given some different authorities and worked through that. And now is the time where we might need a new, different integrator.

And, you know, we didn’t look at a couple other mission sets which might actually be also conducive to pulling together an integrator. But the idea is that the threat is increasing. We’re stovepiped and we need an entity or someone to ensure and enable – I think that’s the key thing – enable the right type of decisions to be made.

Dr. Karako: Gotcha. So, just to clarify, you’re not talking about, you know, the COCOMs and how they’re pulling things together. You’re not talking about integrated planning. What you’re focused on is kind of the acquisition, the budgeting,
the requirements, and really, above all, the urgency, it sounds like, above all those things.

Dr. Greenwalt: The existing acquisition budget requirements system is too slow to meet the threat that’s evolving. So, yes. How do you get – how do you enable that? The COCOMs have to deal with whatever capabilities they have today. You know, and they can look ahead and try to, you know, influence that. But they’ve got to do the fight today. This is about the fight tomorrow. But it’s not 15 years and 20 years in the future. It’s two to five years into the future. And so you need a speedier acquisition system, a speedier budget system, a speedier requirements system to give the tools to the combatant commanders. And that requires a different way of looking at this and a different set of authorities.

And you spent a lot of time in the report talking about authorities and talking about flexible authorities, and speed, and all that kind of stuff. And I hear what you’re saying in terms of especially these other two mission sets – cruise missile defense, counter UAS. And it sounds like what you’re really saying is all of those aspects of missile defense that the surfaces are taking care of it. Is that your – a special target of emergency? Although, I also hear you saying everything.

Dr. Greenwalt: Roger, you want to – if you want to take this? I’m happy to go with it though.

Mr. Kodat: He is my panel chair, after all.

Dr. Greenwalt: Yeah, yeah. This is not a let’s take authority away from the services. This is how do you enable whoever is responsible for these various missions sets or various sensing – you know, if you’re sensing, if you’re targeting, whoever’s responsible – to enable them to go faster and to achieve for the enterprise, or the for the Department of Defense, for that nation, the most optimum types of solutions. Or, multiple optimal types of solutions. And so, yeah, this is not a let’s go take authority away from the services because they’re not doing it right. The services are doing a tremendous job in many, many areas.

It’s a how can we get the services to use faster acquisition? So how can we get to the services more flexible pots of money, so that they can execute on a mission that is going to benefit the entire nation, not necessarily just the Air Force, or the Navy, or so on? And so this is not a return to command and control, let’s tell the services what to do, which is kind of been a history of defense management since 1958. This is a different way of looking at how do we provide central insight and assistance to those who are actually executing? And I think that’s a – that’s a major distinction.

Dr. Karako: Yeah, it reminds me a lot of, I think, what John Hyten was always, you know, going around and saying to anybody who would listen, is the need to go fast
across the board, and the need to use the authorities that are there in the JCIDS, to use the authorities with the urgency that – he loved to quote the statutory language on this – that already exists there. So I guess what I hear you saying is that there needs to be what you call an enterprise integrator. It sounds to be something that is driving urgency for these mission sets, for these threat sets, across the board.

Dr. Greenwalt: And understands and is willing to use all of those flexible authorities. And when they run up against the barrier, they can – they have the clout to go to Congress, and/or to the secretary, or even to the president and say, we need to use something else. And, you know, because this is just not going fast enough. The smaller entities who are down in the – you know, in the bureaucracy, tend not to want to do that. And they become risk averse. And they've been beaten down when they've tried to do some – or some of them have beaten down when they try to do something innovative. And this larger organization, this larger integrator, this larger managerial leadership needs to be the ones that strips away those barriers and encourages that flexibility. And that’s – and that’s a different – again, it’s a different subset of an idea between centralized command and control, we’re going to tell you what to do, versus you guys go execute, tell us where the barriers are and we’ll try to remove them. Different managerial style.

Dr. Karako: Now you – now you, in terms of management, in terms of organizational – org chart kind of thing – you don’t prescribe any one particular entity. You list some criteria. You talk about the importance of consolidating authorities. You kind of complement the consolidation of authorities within MDA, but you also talk about this other function, the consolidation of authorities. And also, high level. You kind of throw out the four-star level thing as the necessary heft. So I recognize that you don’t prescribe what that is. I think the language is, the deputy secretary or some other component the deputy designates. Can you talk a bit about some of the options there, recognizing that you didn’t prescribe?

Mr. Kodat: Well, first of all, perhaps we should be clear, we weren't trying to be coy. Our panel, in their wisdom, suggested that if we went to option one, two, and three, there would be some enormous downside risk for some of the folks in the components, in the department, who know far more than we do. And so as, if you will, public administration specialists, we sort of knew where our limits could be. But the scream of this report is to find an integrator that would bring these components together, as you talked about that second option, Tom.

But we saw a great peril in saying, well, it should be a new COCOM, or it should be – we do talk in the report about an MDA-like organization, perhaps even consideration to MDA having expanded authorities – although that was something that we explored in some conversation and recognize there’s a lot
of challenges to that. But what Bill said was very – you know, very much hopefully resonating throughout the report, that this is not to raze and destroy what’s already existing. But rather, to add to, and to complement, what’s in place now and ensure that there’s a cohesive whole, because of what we’ve talked about. The fact that there’s so many adversaries that now have all four, and if they’re smart they’ll use all four. And let’s pray that they’re stupid.

Dr. Greenwalt: We had some great panel meetings, discussed all the potential options. And really, yeah, it got down to, you know, the secretary should pick that, OK? All these options should come up. And that’s the secretary’s job or the deputy secretary’s job to make that decision. And, you know, the options are fairly obvious to, you know, organizationally, where you may want to go. You can create a new organization. You could do MDA. You can do a COCOM. You can – you know, I mean, the deputy secretary could just create a new working group to do all this.

Dr. Karako: You could have the MDEB kind of oversee air defense, CMD, things like that as well.

Dr. Greenwalt: Exactly. But there’s no reason for us to say that. What we wanted to do is start the debate off on whoever has this function, what kind of integrator should it be? You know, what’s the meaning of integration? And as they move forward and think about where are the options to do this, they’re thinking through, yeah, we need to go fast. We need to be agile. We need to use authorities, because, you know, the threat is so compelling. And actually, frankly, it probably could be solved in any of those type of organizations.

Dr. Karako: Right. But letting me reflect back to you your criteria, which is you’re – am I hearing you right that you are not looking or necessarily advocating – I recognize you’re not recommending a particular thing – an additional layer of bureaucracy that that either, you know, supersedes or directs the services. You’ve used the word “enabler” and not an additional layer of bureaucracy. Is that correct?

Mr. Kodat: That is correct. And I think it’s featured – if one thinks about, what was Congress looking for in this report? Allow me to just take a moment to think about this with us. First, what are the roles and responsibilities for these various threat types? We don’t know. Hopefully, a contribution, thanks to the partners at DOD who helped us. Clarity around roles and responsibilities for these four threat types is a big step forward, but by no means gets us where we need to be. But there could be an argument made that Congress would be perhaps willing to consider how the next step could be the DOD taking action to make these rather patchwork-y looking roles and responsibilities for the four threat types, without being, you know, impolite and disrespectful, to
have an integrator organization that makes sense, now that we know who
does what.

Yes, we could benefit from an organization loosely holding on but with
convening authority, with a close connection to civilian leadership – which is
another point that’s made about this integrator and should be stressed – but
that has the four-star authority that – which would be a legislative action – to
draw these organizations together in a more cohesive whole. May 9th was a
very interesting Senate hearing. Four amazingly talented – I mean, not
enough superlatives could be used for the four witnesses that were before
the Senate Armed Services Committee. And Senator King from Maine asked
the question: Who do I talk to? Who do I contact when I have a question
about missile defense? That’s my summary of his question.

And I thought it was a very thoughtful question. And the four witnesses
didn’t have a – (snaps fingers) – it’s me. And that’s not Roger Kodat being
impolite. Again, it was there isn’t someone who – except for the Secretary of
Defense, perhaps – who has the immediate responsibility to answer that
question. Now, that person, if the integrator is formulated in an appropriate
way, there would be a person who would be responsible, and then work with
the team, to get to the answers. But that was an intriguing moment for me, as
we were in the final stages of getting this report done.

Dr. Greenwalt: You know, the department could create a new bureaucracy, if it so chooses.
And, you know, you can’t really – but really, all they need is an individual
with authority, with stature, that is able to work, and use, and incentivize the
type of – and enable the use of the type of authorities that are needed in
these various entities. And so is that one – is that another box? I don’t know.
Is it coming off the deputy secretary? I mean, there are so many boxes over
there, and so many spaghetti charts, it’s hard to say. But the issue is, you
need someone there to help the organization get to the next level.

Dr. Karako: Well, I’ll just say, you know, it reminds me a lot of the recommendation that
was in the National Defense Strategy Commission from 2018 actually made a
very similar recommendation, that there should be some senior DOD official
with – to develop and integrate some long-term – very, very similar, I would
say, kind of conclusion to where you – where you came to. So, staying with
the characteristics of that enterprise integrator that you envision here –
staying with the characteristics – I’d ask you to maybe think about how you
spoke and how you analyzed MDA in its capacity as tech integration
authority. You describe that. You said, you know, they were designated a
long time ago, but it’s neither resourced and it’s mostly hortatory. They can
make suggestions, you note in the report, but they are just suggestions. So
how does your integrated – enterprise integrator – how does it do more than
make suggestions, as you envision it?
Dr. Greenwalt: I mean, that’s – yeah, that’s, you know, TBD, of course. But the vision of MDA having essentially the milestone decision authority, essentially having the ability to decide in these large-scale programs. I’m not sure in the future. Those are the – that’s the right question, OK? The future is really kludging together and bringing together a lot of the capabilities that we already have. And they need the authority to do that. Starting off on a new missile interceptor that’s going to be deployed in the next 15 or 20 years, and have the technical authority over that, and can tell, you know, ANS, and CAPE, and all these others to go, you know, pound sand, that’s not relevant to the fight we’re going to have.

Relevant to the fight we’re going to have is: How do we get better sensors in the field quickly? How do we tie them together? How do we use advanced AI and computing to work? And then the testing – needs authority over the testing on how this is going to work. And we have to do it rapidly, not just say, oh, we’re going to do a test in five years in Kwajalein, because that’s – you know, that’s when the assets are worthwhile. No. We have to do this next week. And if we blow a few things up on the pad, that four-star whoever it is, can say, wow, we learned a lot from that. And we’re not – we have – we need to go beyond this.

So technical authority, yeah. There has to be some technical authority there, and they have to use it. But in the milestone decision world, and in the big major programs world, which this seems to all play out, that’s almost irrelevant to where we’re going in the future. At least, you know, in my opinion. And this organization needs to figure out how to integrate the capabilities we have and what’s in the pipeline.

Dr. Karako: Gotcha.

Dr. Greenwalt: I don’t know, Roger –

Mr. Kodat: No, totally. The great concern, of course, is the speed of the development of cruise and UAS, notwithstanding some flexibilities that are provided through the JCIDS process. The report is clear that MDA’s flexibilities in their acquisition process should be considered very strongly, if not put into place, for those two other missile threat types. And speed is a critical piece and message of this report. So recognizing how fast, especially with this horrid war in Ukraine where our adversaries are testing and using their threats, and advancing them, unfortunately, in real time against human beings.

But the fact is, that this is getting only worse, not better. We have Mr. Putin and Mr. Kim meeting even as we speak in Russia talking about, what? Rockets. So these are only going to expand in time. We know that technology in the 21st century is just exploding. I think Ray Kurzweil, the chief engineer
at Google, talks about expecting tantamount to 20,000 years of technology change in this century alone. I find that hyperbole to get my attention. But so to one of the points of this report, in terms of talking about speed, is the waste of being slow.

Dr. Greenwalt: So let me give you an example of kind of a vision that you could articulate. And, again, it goes back to technical authority. The traditional acquisition system is too slow and too bureaucratic. And frankly, it just – it’s not going to go there. The non program of records are designed – and frankly the middle-tier acquisition authorities that some organizations are using – are designed to return us back to how we developed the first ICBMs, all right? And we didn’t know the detailed requirements of the JCIDS process. We didn’t even have an – we had some companies we could bet on and, frankly, the department was almost like a venture capitalist in betting on companies at the time.

But most importantly, it was acquiring and developing based on time. And all these capabilities – whether it was the first ICBMs, second ICBMs, the first space launch, the first satellites – were all done in a period of less than five years from the light goes on, let’s go – let’s go do – let’s go get a capability, to operationally putting it out in the field, all right? That’s the way we need to think. That’s not the program of record, 5,000 JCIDS, PPBE process that we have today that, oh, let’s deploy something in the 2040s now, because that’s really what we’re talking about now.

No. How do we affect what’s going on in the South China Sea in two to five years? That’s not a program of record. That’s a middle-tier acquisition. That’s a – MDA was given authority to do national missile defense in the early 2000s, was able to do that in just a few years. That’s the example of what this integrator could do if they got the right authorities and then – and then Congress were to be willing to give them the flexible budgeting that once MDA had.

Dr. Karako: Right. So let me summarize some of that. One, you – Bill, you flagged what I would call systems integration. There certainly needs to be some of that to put the pieces together of what we have today. I think we’re going to probably see that in high relief with the defensive of Guam as the Army, as lead service, now goes off and solves that perfect missile defense problem. But again and again, in the report and the conversation just now you say, OK, I mean, you kind of need that vision thing, somebody high up that that leans on everybody, and has the implements to lean on everybody, to drive the urgency. And where that leads you to, again, again in the report, is acquisition flexibility.
So, in your analysis, you talk about the Trump administration’s DTM – the Trump DTM that, as you note in your report, rolled back in MDA authority somewhat. Can you talk to us about how it did that?

Dr. Greenwalt: So what the Trump administration, I think, was trying to – it was trying to figure out how to deal with MDA authorities – military authorities. And the authorities that, frankly, I was in a wonderful position to help work with Senator McCain to put into law in 2015 and 2016. The Trump administration was trying to figure out what to do about them. And so middle tier was designed to go back to the old way we used to develop and buy things. And the expansion of other transactions was a contracting way of doing around. So they were – they had a problem. They’re trying to do this.

So what they were – but what they chose to do is let’s apply this – and try to apply this to everyone in the department. And say, well, we got all this flexibility, let’s apply it. And in doing so, I think they – and I’m not sure how it happened – they limited the authority of MDA. They gave other entities greater authority, because they had nothing. But MDA had – essentially, we modeled – and I helped with the legislation on this – modeled middle-tier authority over MDA, OK? I mean, we modeled acquisition reform, you know, over – you know, that was one of the examples. So it got rolled back.

And now, all of the political constraints and the approval authorities of getting those acquisition authorities are in place now for MDA that, you know, are still in place for everyone else. MDA needed more autonomy. It needs more autonomy. It needs more flexibility because of the urgency of the mission. And it had this historically. And the height of it was about 2002-2003. And subsequently, over the years, and ended up, in 2017, getting less and less and less of that. And we need to go the exact opposite way.

Dr. Karako: No, it is a bit of a head scratcher. (Laughter.) The 2019 Missile Defense Review spent, I don’t know hundreds or maybe thousands of words talking about the need to go faster for missile defense, specifically. And then, like, months later they issue the Trump DTM. So your report, I think, notably, calls for the department to at least look at reversing the DTM, getting rid of it. And I would certainly note that the House Armed Services in their NDAA language for this year specifically call for rescinding that specific DTM. So I hope the Biden administration looks at whether they still want to be governed by the Trump administration here.

Dr. Greenwalt: And because Trump did it, maybe they want to, like, overturn it. That would be good. You never know.

Dr. Karako: Well, I don’t know. I don’t know.
But the other thing that you highlight is the CPMR. What is that? And how does that fit into really the management of not just MDA, but the management of this enterprise?

Dr. Greenwalt: Do you want to do the definition there?

Mr. Kodat: No, I don’t think so.

Dr. Greenwalt: Oh, OK, all right. I’m sorry.

Dr. Karako: The Joint Staffs?

Dr. Greenwalt: Oh, I’m sorry.

Dr. Karako: Management review, yeah.

Dr. Greenwalt: Yeah, yeah, yeah. OK. My bad.

Mr. Kodat: No, mine too.

Dr. Greenwalt: All right. I was speaking in acronyms. OK, the other acquisition authority – so acquisition is not just contracting. It’s not just the 5,000. It’s not just the PPBE. You know, it’s the requirements process, JCIDS process. And for – that was basically the biggest acquisition end round that the Rumsfeld memos came up in 2002 was to give them that authority. And as much as I love the Joint Staff, as much as I – the current JCIDS process, the current process there, is not fast enough and not – it’s just not agile enough to do it.

You know, in going back to acquisition reform, it was our hope when we gave the service chiefs acquisition authority, or put them back into the acquisition process, that they would drive change in the requirements process. And that just hasn’t happened. So there’s no need to put that back in.

Dr. Karako: One of your two main recommendations, you know, really called out both, you know, getting rid of the DTM impairments, but also the concern about testing failure, review boards, in the CPMR potentially causing delays. Well, let me kind of pivot now to the – to the air and cruise missile defense of the homeland. You have a couple little interesting case studies in here. One of them is CMD-H that the Air Force was designated the lead service for that last year. Similar, I guess, or parallel to the – to the CUAS and stuff that the Army’s doing. Your concern is that, you say, it may be too soon to tell, but is the Air Force equipped? Are they – are they moving out with the authorities to do this with the urgency? Is that fair to say?

Mr. Kodat: Yeah, that’s fair to say. It’s relatively new. And there’s – you know, it’s a huge challenge to work on that. So we met with – the secretary of the Air Force
received us. And, trust me, it was a very frank conversation. And really appreciated the chance to understand some of his concerns. And we’re moving on, on this.

Dr. Karako:  
Gotcha. OK.

So one of the other things that you were tasked to look at is kind of timelines for these things. Roger, I heard you say a minute ago, the waste of time. I thought that was an interesting formulation. Do you have timelines in here? How did you approach that?

Mr. Kodat:  
So we urged NDAA – the 2025 NDAA to have components of the recommendations to be perhaps evidenced from the report in that legislation. And it is underscoring the urgency. So as quickly as can be taken, actions can be taken, but not so specific a timetable as to have dates and times.

Dr. Karako:  
Gotcha. Yeah, I mean, from a timeline perspective, you know, the department can start implementing going faster, being more agile, like, tomorrow. And kind of going back to your Air Force discussion, the Air Force seems to be slowing things down, and seems to be, you know, putting more process back into the system because – you know, a data driven type of a thing. And that may be a luxury that we can no longer have. And so, you know, timelines should be as soon as practically possible. And even if you don’t create an integrator, you don’t create this, you need to start using the existing authorities that you have.

And start trying to – start thinking about developing in time, and moving around some two- to three-year JCIDS process, and the lumbering three-year PPBE process, and the 5,000 process, which will deliver capability in the next 15 years, and a contracting FAR process that takes up to two years to do an existing contracting action. You know, we’ve got OTAs. We’ve got mid-tier. We’ve got all different ways of moving around. And they need to have a good dialogue with Congress immediately on how can we get flexible funds to move some of this around?

Dr. Karako:  
So we get a question from the audience that’s come in. I think they’re kind of pushing back a little bit on you here.

Dr. Greenwalt:  
OK, good.

Dr. Karako:  
Says, hey, you know, what’s the problem be solved exactly? This sounds like a unity of effort challenge, and maybe less about integration. Are there examples where organizations are actually working at cross purposes, headed in the wrong direction, or at least pursuing their mission with great
inefficiency? And that comes from retired Brigadier General Chris Spillman. So do you have some examples of that? Is it a unity of effort challenge?

Dr. Greenwalt: Unity of effort challenge is fine. But to do what? You know, we can pull everyone together and address – and with whatever capabilities I’ve got, and I’m certain we will come up with a reasonable way of moving forward. The problem is, is that our adversaries are moving much – at a much faster rate than we are. And the current unity of effort approach with the current managerial processes we have, once we get our act together and start executing, is conducive to meeting – getting new capability in the field in 2040, all right? So there’s no sense of urgency yet in the department. And there’s no understanding that we can do anything else but the existing 5,000, JCIDS, and PPBE process to get us there.

And so we’ll just continuously fight it in the services and will continuously fight it with certain agencies that we’ve developed, like MDA. And will incrementally plod along here. And, you know, we can do that. That’s the way we’ve always done it. And we can always declare it a success. But my challenge, and I think the department’s challenge, is we got to – we have to accept reality that we no longer are technologically dominant. We have no proliferation has happened. And it’s happening daily. That the rest of the world is using and testing capabilities that we didn’t think would ever be potentially used against us and will be. And we need to move faster and be more agile in doing this.

And so, you know, can we all get together and work around and make the suboptimized decisions that we’ve always made in the past and call that unity of effort? Sure. But you need – I would say that that’s not going to be successful, and that you need the benefit – and, again, the general is very – I understand the fear that this will turn into a command-and-control type structure, because that’s kind of what we kind of do in the Department of Defense. And they’ll tell – make stupid decisions, and tell people do stuff that that is – that’s not the type of structure we need to be looking for.

We need to be saying: Here’s somebody with a toolset, that’s got money, that’s got authorities, that has the ability to enable the various – and incentivize the various units out there to go faster, to take a little more risk, and to deliver capability on a timeframe that, right now, seems just completely unacceptable because, oh my gosh, you know, our industrial base can’t handle this. Well, there are industrial bases out there that are delivering capability in less than a year. Those are the types of things we need to focus on. Go ahead.

Dr. Karako: Yeah, no, that’s good. I think I think that’s why I tried to focus on the characteristics of the enterprise integrator that you are recommending here, as opposed to the office or, you know, that sort of thing, because what I’m
hearing from you again, and again is the need to enable. And it’s kind of that vision thing, and force of urgency. And maybe the enterprise integrator is called the secretary of defense or secretary defense with somebody who helps them stay on top of it.

Dr. Greenwalt: Special assistant to the secretary of defense for this, yeah.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. And maybe it’s nothing more complicated than that. But it sounds like that urgency and the drive – which, you know, frankly, is a corollary. If these are indeed weapons of choice, if, as the department senior officials have said, missile defense is not a peripheral concern, it’s a foundational concern for the threat that it presents itself, then, of course, it should be a departmentwide concern.

Dr. Greenwalt: What has got us to where we are today is not going to get us to where we need to be in the future. Let’s put it that way. And so it’s important to look at the ability to drive a different outcome. And I understand the fear that you create something, or you designate somebody, and in the typical way – because we – you know, the Department of Defense is pretty much a Soviet-style command and control structure. And it needs to somehow become a venture capitalistic, entrepreneurial entity, which is completely against its culture. Although, it was its culture in the ’40s, ’50s and early ’60s. So we need – you know, if we can return to that, that would be great. But I understand the fear that you start moving around the deck chairs, you’re just going to create command and control structures, which are going to, you know, screw up whatever success we have. That’s a risk. I’ll guarantee that. But it’s going to happen, because that’s what’s happening today, and we need to change what we’re doing today.

Dr. Karako: Great. Well, gentlemen, we’ve covered a lot of ground here. Appreciate your time today. Any closing thoughts as we round off? Roger, you want to go first?

Mr. Kodat: I like what Bill said. What got us here won’t get us there. What we found is incredible men and women, civilian and military, who live and breathe this, some of them for decades. They must have started when they were 12. (Laughter.) But truly incredible. But I believe, based on conversations we had with very senior folks, that there’s a sense that this thing has to be tied together better. And that this is such a massive, lethal, time-sensitive threat that we haven’t seen before – we haven’t seen before. But these missile defense weapons are used every day, as we all know, because the fact that they’re there, and our adversaries know that we’re on our game, simply said, is going to keep us safe. And this report takes the yet next step, in light of where we are in 2023 and in light of what we see. And I think it’s going to make a step forward for us, to keep us safe.
Dr. Karako: Great. Thank you.

Dr. Greenwalt: No, I’d just say the world is completely changing. The technological, the commercial marketplace is driving technology today. It’s not the military anymore. And DOD needs to adapt to how to look at and bring in that type of technology. And just think of an entirely different managerial structure on how it develops capabilities. Because he who figures out how to take advantage of what’s going out there in the commercial marketplace will win the next struggle. And right now, we are full of our hubris that, well, our processes work. Well, our processes worked against a very, very – we worked against the Soviet Union, who thought in five year plans, that had a managerial command-and-control type of economy.

It’s not going to work against someone else who thinks in a different way. And we need to take advantage of our advantages, which is the ability to use that commercial marketplace. And that requires changing ideas and looking at how we – it’s all about software. It’s all about integration. It’s all about moving pieces together. And to me, that’s really – technology’s driving our managerial solution here. So I hope the department can do that. And I hope you can, you know, help in moving the ball forward on your side.

Dr. Karako: I’m sure I'll have lots more to say about integration in the coming months here at CSIS. Thank you both. Thanks, everybody, for coming out and tuning in online, and the great questions that have come in. And please come back to see us sometime.

Dr. Greenwalt: Absolutely.

Mr. Kodat: Thank you, Tom.

Dr. Greenwalt: Thank you.

(END.)