

Recently DOD published the final report of the Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on Fulfilling Urgent Operational Needs. The DSB Task Force, chaired by Dr, Jacques Gansler, made several conclusions that are surprising for their candor. Among the Task Force's conclusions:

- The DOD is "not geared to acquire and field capabilities in a rapidly shifting threat environment."
- "Current long standing [DOD] business practices and regulations are poorly suited" to the dynamics of a rapidly shifting threat environment."
- "Today, the DOD is saddled with processes and oversight built up over decades, and managers leading them who are often rewarded for risk aversion."
- "All of DOD's acquisition needs cannot be met by the same acquisition processes."

Accordingly, the DSB Task Force made several recommendations, including:

- The DOD should have two acquisition paths, one for "rapid" and "urgent" needs, and the other for "deliberate" needs.
- Rapid acquisitions should be funded separately from deliberate acquisitions.
- A new agency, the Rapid Acquisition and Fielding Agency (RAFA) should be created to oversee rapid acquisitions. The existing acquisition agency (DCMA) should focus on deliberate acquisitions.

Some observations;

1. If the DSB Task Force rhetoric sounds familiar, it's likely because Dr. Gansler was Under Secretary for Defense (Acquisition, Technology & Logistics) from 1997 to 2001 and participated in a number of acquisition innovations, from implementation of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA) to implementation of Performance-Based Payments. Under his leadership, the DOD aspired to "partner" with industry, an approach heavily criticized by others.
2. It is not clear, because the report does not seem to address the issue, how the mission and staffing of the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) would be affected, should the Secretary of Defense implement the recommendations.

One may assume that the DCMA would focus on administering "deliberate" acquisitions while the new agency (RAFA) focuses on the rapid acquisitions, but certainly DCMA's budget, staffing and program role would be impacted.

3. The Task Force recommendations to not address the statutory basis for many of the bureaucratic processes it criticizes. Clearly, in order to roll back the oversight and bureaucracy, one must first revise the statutes that require them.

4. Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) spent the last 6 years criticizing the Bush administration's handling of acquisition issues in Southwest Asia. Moreover, every week the Department of Justice issues a press release reporting the indictment or plea bargain or settlement of somebody who accepted a bribe related to such acquisitions. It is far from clear how such "rapid" acquisitions would guard against such problems.

See the entire DSB Task Force report [here](#) .