Experts gather at National Security Summit

In early September, a panel of military and government agency leaders gathered to share their experiences and perspectives on cyber and intelligence issues at the Intelligence and National Security Summit. The Summit is the premier gathering of senior decision makers from government, military, industry and academia.

Panelists included commander of U.S. Cyber Command and director of the National Security Agency (NSA) Navy Admiral Michael Rogers and director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency Robert Cardillo. Rogers, Cardillo, and the other panelists discussed implications and opportunities involved in integrating artificial intelligence and human analysis, and other national defense and homeland security issues.

Among other topics, Rogers also discussed NSA’s initiative to develop cross-fertilization between the public and private sector.

This is the third year the event has taken place.

- DoD News

Report: Post-Katrina coordination could be improved

In July, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report assessing the effectiveness of emergency communications after the implementation of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA). The PKEMRA was enacted to improve the federal government’s preparation for and response to disasters, including emergency communications.

GAO-16-681 examines federal efforts to implement PKEMRA emergency communications provisions related to planning and federal coordination, and how states’ emergency communications planning has changed since PKEMRA. During the investigation, GAO reviewed relevant reports and documentation from DHS and other agencies, surveyed Statewide Interoperability Coordinators, and interviewed federal and state officials selected for their emergency communications experience. GAO also assessed collaborative efforts of the Emergency Communications Preparedness Center’s (ECPC), an interagency group focused on improving coordination and information sharing among federal emergency communications programs.

GAO found that the implementation of the PKEMRA provisions related to emergency communications planning and federal coordination has enhanced federal support for state and local efforts. However, federal coordination could be improved. GAO also found that the EPCP’s efforts, while consistent with the key features identified for collaborative mechanisms, could benefit from clearly defining goals and tracking their progress.

- Government Accountability Office

DoD updates manual on intelligence

The Department of Defense (DoD) has updated its procedures on intelligence activities. The updated manual governs “how DoD intelligence elements will conduct activities supporting their missions while safeguarding legal rights and protections guaranteed by the Constitution to all U.S. persons,” said DoD senior intelligence oversight official Michael Mahar.

Changes to DoD Manual 5240.01, “Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities,” include updated procedures for the “collection” of information about U.S. persons and frameworks of distinct rules for information about U.S. persons that has been collected.
According to Mahar, updating the manual was an interagency process involving senior representatives of all defense intelligence components, including the Joint Staff, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, National Reconnaissance Office, and National Security Agency. They also worked closely with the Department of Justice and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

**Report advises next administration on national security**

In June, the Atlantic Council published a report on the organization and performance of the National Security Council (NSC) system. The report provides insight and advice intended to help the next administration build an effective national security structure and clear up “strategic confusion.”

The report is the result of multiple interviews and seminars with over sixty senior foreign service policy, defense, and intelligence leaders. The authors conclude that structural and personnel failures at the NSC in the management of foreign, defense, intelligence, and legal policy have led to serious mistakes in foreign and defense policy.

According to the authors, an incoming president has seven fundamental decisions to make regarding the organization, staffing, and management of the NSC:

1. Focus the National Security Council Mission
2. Define the National Security Advisor’s Role
3. Reduce and Restrict the Size of the NSC Staff
4. Designate a Strategic Planning Staff
5. Use Interagency Teams and Task Forces
6. Coordinate Legal Advice
7. Prepare for the Transition Now

The authors suggest that reforming the size, mission, and staffing of the NSC can bring a return to models that have succeeded over many decades, saying that “Good structure does not guarantee success, but bad structure almost always overcomes good people and leads to poor results.”

**State, DoD counter terrorism online**

In July, the State Department provided an update on their Global Engagement Center, which was established this spring after the signing of Executive Order 13721. The Center is an interagency entity charged with coordinating U.S. counterterrorism messaging to foreign audiences, and replaced the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications.

The Center is staffed by detailees from several U.S. agencies and liaises with many U.S. national security agencies to effectively coordinate, integrate, and synchronize their efforts. The Center is also focused on building partnerships to combat violent extremist messaging, analyzing data to inform messaging efforts, and creating content to counter ISIL.

The military is also working to fight ISIL online. Cybercom seeks to disrupt and destroy ISIL’s ability to use the internet and social media as a means to further their goals, and Central Command utilizes native-born Arabic, Urdu, Russian, Farsi, Dari, and Pashto speakers in their Digital Engagement Teams.

- Atlantic Council
- State Department