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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
STRATEGIC PLANNING

by

Lieutenant General Lauris Norstad

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**GENERAL BULL:** Gentlemen, today we will hear the Air Force in the third and last presentation on the logistics and strategic planning in the three Service departments. General Norstad will speak on the strategic planning, and he will be followed by General Griswold in the field of logistics.

General Norstad's very outstanding position in the field of planning in the Air Force is quite apparent to all of us as we trace through his experience during the war and since. He started out as A-3 of the 12th Air Force in the Northwest African Air Forces, then as Director of Operations in the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, then as Deputy Chief of the Air Staff of the Army Air Forces, followed by postwar experience as Director of Plans and Operations of the War Department General Staff, and finally his present position is that of Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, of the United States Air Force. This eight years of experience in the high command and staff problems certainly equips him to speak with great authority on his assigned subject today - strategic planning.

It is a very great pleasure for me to introduce to you, General Norstad.

**GENERAL NORSTAD:** General Bull, gentlemen: It is a pleasure for me to be here this morning. It is always a pleasure to appear before the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces whose members I understand are also here this morning. It is a particular pleasure since I am not required to make a formal speech and what is perhaps an even greater relief

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to me, and perhaps to you, is that you are not forced to listen to one.

When my colleagues and I - General Gruenther and Admiral Struble - compared notes on our assigned subjects for this series of talks you are hearing this week, we arrived at the conclusion we could not all three speak on the subject of departmental planning in the strategic field without duplication. The general principles, the broad structure and the mechanics of carrying out planning are in substance the same in all three Services. It was agreed that Admiral Struble would make the speech, and then General Gruenther and I would appear later on the assigned days to answer any questions.

I don't propose this morning to go into any lengthy discussion of the details of Air Force Planning matters. I don't propose to elaborate on the peculiarities, the virtues or the weaknesses of the Air Force system. There are a few points, however, that I would like to touch on before I throw it open for questions. In the questions that follow my very brief talk I hope you will direct and control the talk to meet your requirements rather than to have me try to meet them.

I hope in my few remarks I can avoid adding to what appears to be general confusion, if not chaos, in our thinking at this particular time. I am particularly concerned about that, since I have either been labeled as a planner, as General Bull pointed out, or closely associated with planners for a considerable period of time. One characteristic which is attributed to planners is that they speak a language and write a language which bears only the slightest resemblance to English at times, and they use this language in excessive quantity. I hope I will not add to the confusion or chaos. At this point something should remind any speaker of a story, so I am reminded of a story.

[ Three men were discussed<sup>N4</sup> which was the oldest profession in the

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world. There were no members of the other sex present, so the scope of the discussion was somewhat limited. For the purposes of this story we will say a doctor, a lawyer and a planner were discussing this matter. The doctor insisted the medical profession - surgery - was the oldest profession in the world since one of the first acts was the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. He said, "The removal of that rib - the whole operation - certainly involved surgery and consequently a surgeon must have been present. So - the medical profession - surgery - was surely the oldest profession in the world."

The other two parties to the discussion thought for a while and the lawyer finally spoke up. He said, "I grant you that you have considerable evidence to support your position, however, it occurs to me that the legal profession is the oldest profession in the world. One of the first acts before the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve, according to the good book, which I quote as my authority, was the establishment of order, the creation or order out of chaos. Now, the establishment of order and the maintenance of it involves certain laws and regulations, and laws, regulations, and rules are the primary functions of lawyers. So, consequently, there must have been a lawyer present when God created order out of chaos."

The planner at that point looked a little disconsolate, and he felt he was somewhat outdone by these two distinguished friends of his. Finally, he got a twinkle in his eye and sparked up and said: "I have listened to you two gentlemen, and I accept the fact that you have so much weight to your arguments in favor of your particular profession. However, I must contest both of you, the position both of you have taken, and I must state the oldest profession is that of the planner." The doctor and the lawyer were both completely astounded by that. Finally the doctor said, "I laid my claim

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on the fact that Eve was created from the rib of Adam, which certainly involved surgery. I thought that would surely win for my profession, however, the lawyer went beyond that. The lawyer claimed the honor for his profession since laws and regulations were necessary to create order out of chaos, which antedates the creation of Eve." He said, "I think that has got it, the function of the lawyer is creating order out of chaos. But I cannot understand how you claim that your profession of planning was the first profession."

The planner then looked up and said, "I grant you that you have made a good case. I am particularly impressed with the lawyer's arguments on making order out of chaos, but I would like to ask one question: "who created chaos"? ]

Now, Admiral Struble spoke to you last week and gave the basic talk on this subject of the mechanics of planning, and General Gruenther had agreed that we were to speak for ten minutes. I understand he extended that ten minutes to about forty. The only way I can excuse that is by the fact that he is now an Operations Deputy and somewhat frustrated and took advantage of his position down here.

After these two talks, as I told General Bull this morning, it occurs to me now that the third talk should probably be on the subject of what is wrong with our system. I am not prepared to go into that in detail, but I would like to raise one or two points which appear to me to be danger points in our present system. Since there are no Chiefs present, I think we might start with the Chiefs themselves - their position as Service Chiefs and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

It has been a matter of concern to them, and to everyone else

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directly involved in the Joint Chiefs' activities, that the nature of their duties, their function as Service Chiefs and Joint Chiefs of Staff, gives them little time to get into the planning problems and the policy problems to the extent that they should, and must, in order to carry out their function properly. Each of the Service Chiefs is charged with a large share of responsibility in running the largest businesses in the world today. I think it is safe to say that each of them is directly involved in running substantially a four billion dollar business. By law and by custom, they have become involved in a great number of duties which, even before the war, when we were maintaining smaller establishments and had fewer problems than we have today, took all of their time and all of their attention. In addition to that they have today the tremendous burden of their function as Joint Chiefs of Staff. Those of you who have had certain functions in the planning and policy business, know from your own experience, how it occupies all of your time, all of your thought and all of your attention. The present burden of the Chiefs, which I would say today lies perhaps in the Joint Chiefs function in wearing their hats as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is of the order of two or three times what it was, just in quantity, in mass, in volume, three to four years ago. If you consider the complexity of the problems that confront them, the seriousness and the magnitude of these problems, we multiply it many, many, times. I have no solution to this problem. I can offer no suggestions as to a way in which the Chiefs can be given time and the opportunity to get into these problems as fully as they should. Several alternatives have been mentioned, but all of them, I am afraid, are bad ones.

One step which has been proposed is that the Chiefs should have a

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deputy who owns no empire within the department, who has no responsibility for the day to day running of that department and whose function is in the field of the Chiefs' joint responsibilities and activities. This deputy would constantly follow on the Joint Chiefs' duties. He would be charged with acquainting the Chief, with doing the studying for him and of telling him everything he should know in that field. There are obvious bugs in that system.

Another alternative, and one which is to some extent practiced today, is to pass the responsibility for the day to day running of the department to the Vice Chief - to his second. The Chiefs, about a year ago, when they realized the Joint Chiefs' problems were getting somewhat out of hand, took the position that they would pass more and more to their Vice Chiefs. I believe that has been done in all departments. In the Air Force it has been done to a considerable degree. I think that is carried now to perhaps the limit that it can be done without establishing a clear break between the Chiefs and the Vice Chief. By a clear break, I mean relieving the Chief by an order or directive, perhaps by an act of law - where it is possible to do certain things by law - of the responsibility of running his department. However, there are still tremendous amounts of details that the Chief must concern himself with.

A more extreme alternative has now been suggested - it has been kicked around - and that is to divorce the Chief from the department entirely and put the department in the hands of a commander. In that instance, the Chief would still be the senior man of his Service, that is, the responsible policy man of his Service, but he would not be concerned with the day to day

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running of the department. Under that scheme the Joint Chiefs of Staff would establish military policy, they would do the strategic planning, they would arrive at the requirements in consultation and with the help of their Services, they would arrive at a statement of requirements and the functions of the Services would be merely to carry out and meet the requirements established by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There are obvious bugs in that solution. Many people would consider it unsound to divide the responsibility for policy and for planning from the responsibility for operations. There are many shades of solutions between these two extremes; one extreme represented by what we have now, and the other by this last solution. It is a problem, however, which will constantly confront the top military policy members in the Military Establishment. Perhaps the solution with the fewest bugs is the system we have at present, but if the Joint Chiefs are to be effective, they will be constantly required to push off the danger of the danger of being overwhelmed by their day to day work. I would point that out as one of the particular dangers of our present system.

A related problem, and one which I think all Services have tried to beat, is the question of direction, direction to the working people, direction to the backroom boys. (I noted in Admiral Struble's talk the other day he referred to Indians. I realized for a long time that there were Indians in the Army, but it is the first time I knew there were Indians in the Navy Department. I thought that was peculiar to the Army). It is a question of how much direction and from whom this direction comes to these Indians. To the working people; to the planning people on the various levels of planning. There is a great danger, if we arrive at hard and fast Service positions

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before we meet with our colleagues from the other Services, that the result may be compromise. Now I think a compromise can involve two things or have two results. One is a free combination of views, and we always have to have that. The other is that we may, by compromise, get into the position where we are bargaining, and when we bargain there is danger that the solution may be somewhat less than the best solution. There is also the danger when we instruct our people with a service view, when they meet on their planning level, when it is apparent that that view is not going to prevail - and sometimes you come in with three views - that all progress stops. They have to go back again for instructions, and you take away from the planning in that particular level, all the initiative. By the time it has gone through the several steps of going through a planning agency and back again to the department for new instructions, for more latitude - back and forth - there is a considerable time loss. There is time enough lost in the clearest and most direct solution of these problems without adding to it.

Now, I know all Services are aware of this. I think all people in the planning agencies are aware of it. I believe the Services are doing their best, each in its own way, to correct this. I think Admiral Struble has told you how it is done in the Navy. Maybe General Gruenther mentioned how it was done in the Army. The Air Force system is perhaps somewhat different in that our planner does not have a small empire of his own in the first instance. He does not have a particular group of working people for whom he is responsible and who are responsible to him. He is somewhat of a free lance in our plans and operations directory. In addition to that, at all levels above him, we try to avoid talking to him, telling him what our views are prior to the time

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he has met with his colleagues - the other planners. We are available to him for guidance. The problem is one of judgment as to how firm the guidance is, and when the guidance is so firm that it becomes in fact instructions.

One of the greatest potential weaknesses and dangers in our present system is the fact that it does not require, but it permits, firm instructions to our representatives on all of the planning levels. The great danger is the danger of compromise. Compromise is necessary and useful if it results from a free combination of views, but it is dangerous if it involves another definition of compromise which is to expose to risk. I believe the danger of risk is involved whenever we depart from an effort to arrive at a free, unobstructed combination of views and resort to bargaining for position.

As I mentioned earlier, I hope, by your questions, you will bring out any points you want clarified as to the organization and methods that we use in the Air Force in strategic planning. But before opening up the questions, I would like to briefly mention one other point. We have become involved in the last few years, in a much broader field of planning policy than we have ever experienced before. The last tangible manifestation of this is perhaps our part in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In connection with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, we hear considerable about military assistance - the MAP program. We are inclined to consider that program and the NATO particularly in terms of material assistance. It is natural that we should do that because we have the problem with Congress, we have the problem of working out programs. I think we tend to weigh the program in terms of dollars and in terms of material equipment that can be made available. It is my view, and I think you will share it, that when the history of this period

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is written the measure of our success in this critical time in our history will be in terms of wisdom, judgment and thinking, and in the strength of our courage in carrying out our judgment. MAP and other forms of material aid are essential, but whether or not they succeed in accomplishing the purposes for which they are made available will be determined by the quality of leadership. Leadership in the full sense that we have available during this period.

Many of you people have been involved in the plans and policies before you came to this school. This school has produced many fine and able men in the planning and policy fields. It will produce more. The problems will go back to, those of you who have been in this business before, and the problems you people will face for the first time, are of greater magnitude, of far more serious consequences than anything you have faced before.

The great weakness - I have mentioned two or three weaknesses and soft points in planning - is now, and has been in the past, and perhaps will always be, the inadequacy of the planners. As I stated earlier, I have been labeled a planner for many years, and have been associated with planners, so my regard for them, naturally, is about the highest. But the big problem today in the military field and I believe it holds in all fields of Government, and perhaps in all countries, is the quality of the thinking, the quality of the planning, that is, translating our thoughts into a plan to do something, and the courage both in the thinking and carrying out of our plans.

I see, like General Gruenther, that I am also suffering from frustration and have exceeded my ten minutes by twice that amount.

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