

August 20, 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL  
SECURITY AFFAIRS (CONDOLEEZZA RICE)

FROM: Donald Rumsfeld *DR*

SUBJECT: Interagency Process

As we have discussed, the interagency process could be improved to help all of us better manage the high volume of work we have. I've talked with my folks about it to see if we could come up with some ideas that might be helpful.

I have just established a position in my office for a Policy person to do nothing but staff Paul Wolfowitz, Doug Feith and me regarding our NSC meeting schedules and papers – to try and help us deal with the many changes in dates, times, agendas, materials, attendees and the like.

We have some suggestions as to how we might save some time and make the process more manageable. Our suggestions are attached. A number of these suggestions are things I'm told we already try to do, but formalizing the rules could make the practice more consistent.

Steve Hadley deserves good marks for his stewardship of the process generally. If we now streamline and otherwise improve our interagency work, it could be a help generally and particularly as the number of problems we face in the world grows. At the minimum, we need a surge capability, and the way we are currently operating doesn't provide much reserve.

Attachment a/s

334MSC

20 August



## THOUGHTS ON THE INTERAGENCY PROCESS

### Meetings -- Scheduling:

- Reduce the average time for PC/DC meetings. Cut scheduled one-hour meetings to 45 minutes; cut half-hour agenda items to 20 minutes.
  - 28 PC and 43 DC meetings were held between 31 May-31 July 02 – that is:
    - roughly 42 hours in PC meetings, not counting travel time of an additional 30 minutes per meeting, or an additional 14 hours.
    - 85 hours in DC meetings, not counting travel time of an additional 21 hours.
- Changing the time or date of scheduled meetings has major ripple effects on the schedules of officials throughout all departments.
  - Last minute changes are especially disruptive, particularly when the meeting time is moved up. Shifting from afternoon to morning cuts into preparation time.
  - Establish a practice for NSC to ask if a rescheduling is workable for the folks involved.
  - Make a rule of giving at least 48 hours notice before changing the date, time or subject of a meeting.

### Meetings -- General Points

- More PC/DC meetings could be held via SVTS.
- The department with the lead on a subject matter should sum up all decisions at the end of the meeting.
  - It sometimes happens that a matter mentioned at a meeting is said to have been “decided” because it elicited no objection. That is not a good practice. Nothing should be deemed decided unless we expressly agree to decide it.



- Decisions should be included in the Summary of Conclusions and no one should subsequently include in the summary that a meeting decided anything more or anything different.
- There should be fewer “Principals Only” meetings.
  - Bringing a “plus one” saves Principal’s time, as there’s less need for the Principal to debrief others later.
  - This applies both at the Principals’ and Deputies’ levels. Since you always have your plus one, it puts a particular burden on the rest of us to be told we may not include a plus one.

**Papers -- Should be Easy to Read:**

- Papers for PCs should, as a rule, be two or three pages, i.e.:
  - Bulletized (as a rule, no more than two sentences per bullet),
  - Thoughtfully formatted (i.e., readable font, sufficient white space so notes can be made)
  - Well-edited – few, if any, 63-word sentences.
- Papers should:
  - Let the reader know up front what the issue is.
  - Set out the basic facts and concepts.
  - Specify agency positions, highlighting differences.
  - Provide pros and cons for the options.

**Papers -- Should be Pitched High:**

- Matters for decision by Principals should be important enough to justify decision or discussion by Principals.
- Relatively lengthy documents (e.g., NSPDs or Findings) that require Principals’ approval should be worked at lower levels first, so that issues for Principals are clearly identified and, if necessary, discussed in a cover memo.



- Important documents that require line in/line out attention should be double- or triple-spaced.

### **Papers (PCC to PC via DC)**

- There is a place in the interagency process for longer, more discursive papers, but that place is generally the PCC or sub-PCC.
- If a PCC works on a matter that should be sent up the chain, it should complete its work by producing a short paper suitable for Principals.
- The PCC members should clear the paper so that each agency is satisfied with the way its position is stated.
  - Papers should not aim at a homogenized consensus. It is useful to clearly and accurately present differences among agencies.
  - Currently, too many papers for Principals are prepared by NSC staff members, rather than by the departments; and too few are cleared in final form by the departments before sending them to the Principals.
- The PCC should then send the cleared paper up to the PC *through the Deputies*.
  - Changes made in a paper should be cleared by the departments.
  - Principals should, as a rule, receive papers the Deputies have cleared.
  - The argument against having the Deputies clear PC papers is that it takes more time. That is true, but the reality is that it takes even more time when papers for Principals do not properly present the issues or the agency positions and have to get sent back down the chain for reworking.
    - As the saying goes: “If we don’t have time to do it right, how are we going to have time to redo it?”
- The NSC Staff has made an effort to distribute papers for DC/PC meetings 48 to 72 hours in advance. There are still many times, however, when this rule is observed in the breach, a problem for which, I suspect, every agency is, at one time or another, responsible.
  - Except for honest-to-goodness time-critical issues, a meeting should automatically be postponed if the materials are not distributed at least 48 hours in advance, or if the time or agenda have to be changed.



## **Papers (distribution)**

- Papers should not be distributed only into the hands of Principals.
  - This can confuse the system. The Principal's staff is cut out and cannot give the Principal the necessary support (tracking, read-ahead).
- When the NSC Staff wants to distribute an especially sensitive paper by courier rather than by fax, it would help to get a phone call and have the option to send over a trusted agent to pick it up so that hours are not lost.
  - A paper recently was sent around by courier with the result that DOD got it last, hours after it was sent out, and long after the addressee had departed for the night.
- Stamping "Eyes Only" on so many documents is unrealistic.
  - This has made the term meaningless and ignored.
  - Also, when documents are kept for the Principal's eyes only, this makes the Principal the action officer, which is rarely appropriate.

