

Special assistant for laboratories

During 1964 it became increasingly apparent that the Task Force approach to handling "The Laboratory Problem" had about run its course. A consensus was developing to the effect that the in-house laboratories lacked meaningful problems, management stability and prominence, and recognition, and they also failed to impact at the highest policy levels. While administrative improvements were valuable and should be pursued diligently, they were not considered, in themselves, sufficient to make laboratories effective tools of the organizations they served.

A position of "Special Assistant for Laboratories" was created in the Office of the Deputy Director, Research and Technology to assist in planning the future of the DoD laboratories and to develop policies concerning their operations. The functions for this position were stated in the form of a series of questions:

1. On what scientific and technical efforts should the Department of Defense put its greatest effort? Its least?
2. What laboratories are to be expanded or upgraded for the foreseeable future?
3. Are any to be phased out or discontinued?
4. What new laboratories should be created? Or what missions of existing laboratories should be changed significantly?
5. How should the laboratories be organized?
6. How should laboratories interact with other RDT&E performance and the decision-making process?
7. What administrative reforms are needed for laboratories?

It is the answers to questions such as these which make it possible to set priorities, to plan laboratories' expansion and construction on an orderly basis and to relate them to programs, money, people, workloads and facilities.

As a result of the initial studies recommending new organizational concepts for Defense laboratories, Dr. Brown, then the Director of Defense Research and Engineering, currently the Secretary of the Air Force, formally established the Office of Laboratory Management in 1965.

Organizational relationships of Defense laboratories

I think that we must first establish the relationship between DDR&E and the in-house laboratories before we can discuss functions of the Office of Laboratory Management in a meaningful way. Almost without exception, the in-house laboratories are organizationally integrated into the Service structures, some at high levels, such as the Naval Research Laboratory, others at relatively low levels like the Army's Night Vision Laboratory at Fort Monmouth. None of these laboratories have a direct line relationship with DDR&E. Their financial support is derived from the programs approved by DDR&E but the operation of these laboratories is under the control of the Military Departments. Each of the Military Departments has a Director of Laboratories, or equivalent, who is directly responsible for the quality and productivity of his Service's laboratories. Each Director of Laboratories has ready access to his Assistant Secretary (R&D) who sets the over-all RDT&E and laboratory policy for his Service.

Because of the importance of Service laboratories in carrying out the Defense RDT&E mission and related activities, DDR&E plays a vital role in establishing the policies and objectives for these organizations. These are placed into effect by the Assistant Secretaries (R&D) and the Directors of Laboratories. They also utilize the laboratories as a source of expertise and advice in the decision making process.

DDR&E is directly involved in many activities affecting the RDT&E of two or more Services, however. Also, his duties include the "directing, controlling, assigning, and reassigning research and engineering activities that the Secretary considers needs centralized management". The area of laboratory management has been designated by the Secretary as requiring DDR&E's attention and concern.

Functions

The Office of Laboratory Management is the organizational arm of DDR&E with respect to in-house laboratories. Our primary purpose is to assist DDR&E in the planning and the execution of a positive program which assures that the Defense Laboratories of the future play key roles in shaping, carrying out, and administering the complex RDT&E programs upon which our Defense posture depends so heavily. An important aspect of this is to see that laboratories are intimately involved in the mainstream of urgent Defense needs, providing the