

1. INTRODUCTION

The Secretary of Defense has often stated as a matter of policy the need for competent and creative in-house technical laboratories. Among the evident reasons underlying this need are: (1) the maintenance of national competence during peacetime, as well as times of conflict, in those areas of technology peculiar to military needs; (2) the necessity for maintaining a continuity of effort, free from commercial pressures and directed toward the conception and evolution of advanced weapon systems; (3) the need for competent in-house skills that can monitor and assess the accomplishments of DoD contractors; and (4) the requirement of having available to the Military Services a fast-reaction capability to solve critical, immediate problems that arise in connection with existing operational weapon systems, or when unexpected combat situations are encountered such as that currently existing in Southeast Asia.

In recent years, increased attention has been given by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Military Departments to the management problems associated with in-house technical efforts. Constructive progress—particularly regarding salaries, working conditions, personnel administration, flexibility of funding, ease of obtaining laboratory instrumentation, etc.—has been made, especially during the past four years. Nevertheless, there remain many critical and fundamental problems relating to laboratory mission areas and to the relevancy of the laboratories' programs to providing our military forces with superior weapons, equipment, training and techniques.

There is a growing awareness that the many innovations during the past years in weapon-system planning, organization and management have had a profound impact on the in-house laboratories, and have given rise to a number of questions regarding their future operations.

The Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on In-House Laboratories held its first meeting on 9 February 1966 and determined that it would:

- (1) Examine how the laboratories contribute to the development and acquisition of military operational systems and equipments.
- (2) Determine the feasibility of establishing weapon centers or lead laboratories, as previously recommended by the Director of Defense Research and Engineering (DDR&E).