

Advance Questions for Mr. Charles S. Abell

Defense Reforms

Almost 15 years have passed since the enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Special Operations reforms.

Do you support full implementation of these defense reforms?

Yes, I support the implementation of the defense reforms. The establishment of the unified and specified combatant commands, the delineation of responsibilities, and most importantly, the focus on “jointness” outlined in the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, has enhanced the readiness and warfighting capabilities of the U.S. Armed Forces.

What is your view of the extent to which these defense reforms have been implemented?

I am impressed by the ways in which these reforms have changed the way the Department of Defense works by strengthening the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the combatant commanders, and significantly improving the ability of the Department to execute America’s national security strategy. The reforms have helped improve communication, joint operations and interoperability – we have strengthened the Armed Forces through these reforms through joint planning and execution of operations.

What do you consider to be the most important aspects of these defense reforms?

I would consider each of the goals noted below to be an important aspect of these defense reforms. Each one has enhanced the ability of the Department of Defense to carry out its assigned responsibilities.

The goals of the Congress in enacting these defense reforms, as reflected in section 3 of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act, can be summarized as strengthening civilian control; improving military advice; placing clear responsibility on the combatant commanders for the accomplishment of their missions; ensuring the authority of the combatant commanders is commensurate with their responsibility; increasing attention to the formulation of strategy and to contingency planning; providing for more efficient use of defense resources; and enhancing the effectiveness of military operations and improving the management and administration of the Department of Defense.

Do you agree with these goals?

Yes, I support the goals of the Congress in enacting the reforms of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation.

Recently, there have been articles which indicate an interest within the Department of Defense in modifying Goldwater-Nichols in light of the changing environment and possible revisions to the national strategy.

Do you anticipate that legislative proposals to amend Goldwater-Nichols may be appropriate? If so, what areas do you believe it might be appropriate to address in these proposals?

While there seems to be a continuous undertone of conversation with regard to amending Goldwater-Nichols, I am not aware of any serious effort to make significant changes at this time. I believe that any effort to modify the principles of this landmark legislation would require careful study, research and extensive consultation.

Duties

What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness?

If confirmed as the Principal Deputy, I will assist the Under Secretary of Personnel Readiness in carrying out every aspect of his responsibilities, functions, relationships, and authorities in law and by DoD directive 5124.2, "Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)). I will be his primary assistant and will assist him in providing staff advice and assistance to the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense for Total Force management as it relates specifically to manpower; force management; planning; program integration; readiness; National Guard and Reserve component affairs; health affairs; training; personnel requirements and management; and compensation. This includes equal opportunity, morale, welfare, recreation, and quality of life matters for both civilian personnel but also for military personnel and their families.

What background and experience do you possess that you believe qualifies you to perform these duties?

I have served as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management policy and as the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness for almost a year. Before my appointment in the Department of Defense, I was privileged to serve as a staff member on the Personnel Subcommittee of this Committee. My experience as a member of the Armed Services Committee staff prepared me to address the breadth and complexity of the issues I have found to be facing the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. I have also found my years of military service provide me a good background for understanding the issues and the environment in which our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines work and live.

Do you believe that there are actions you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness?

I have a healthy curiosity about my profession and the drive to do the very best job that I can. As such, I look for opportunities to learn new things, to hone my abilities and to broaden my horizons. I plan to continue to travel to installations, units and activities in order to gain an appreciation for different perspectives on issues common to the total force and on unique situations from which I can learn of innovative, creative ways to address a problem. I have found discussions with business, academic and government leaders to be educational and I plan to continue to take advantage of the capabilities of these sources as well.

In carrying out your duties, how will you work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, and the Service Secretaries?

If confirmed, I hope to work with the Assistant Secretaries as a team, each providing expertise and leadership in his or her area of responsibility, to help carry out the responsibilities for which I might be held responsible. With the Service Secretaries I hope that I could look to these officers as my service partners in carrying out the human resource obligations of the Department at large, most especially ensuring that DoD attracts, motivates, and retains the quality people it needs.

Major Challenges and Problems

In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness?

Recruiting and retaining men and women with the capability and character to ensure success in a demanding national security environment are formidable challenges for the Department. DoD's transformation of personnel policies and programs must address the changing demographics and expectations of a 21st century military force by providing relevant programs and policies to attract and retain service members and the families who support them. The Total Force policy and the integration efforts of the past decade have paid great rewards, and we must continue to examine the most productive and meaningful employment of the Reserve Components and the National Guard as we face the ever-shifting challenges of force management. Finally, we must take a strategic and modernized approach to the management of the DoD civilian workforce. In all of these areas, we will look to our developing Human Resources Strategy to evaluate the challenges and shape our responses.

Assuming you are confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?

If confirmed, I will continue to review current policies and initiatives in the above areas to determine their effectiveness and to recommend adjustments where needed in order to accomplish these goals.

Priorities

If confirmed, what broad priorities will you establish in terms of issues which must be addressed by the Deputy Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness?

If confirmed, I would hope to prioritize issues that reflect the recognition that people are central to accomplishment of the DoD mission. Priority issues could include the attraction, retention, and motivation of a high quality force; integration of the active and reserve military, civilian employees, and support contractors into a cohesive, flexible, and responsive total force; and enhancement of the quality of life for the total force that supports military members, their families, and retirees across the full human resource life cycle.

Recruiting and Retention

Recruiting and retention in the military services improved significantly last year and so far this year.

In your view, what changed that resulted in improved recruiting and retention in the Armed Forces?

Improved recruiting and retention is due to greater investments and a lot of hard work – and more of the same is required if we are to sustain recent success. First and foremost, our recruiters work longer and harder than they have in the past — more than two thirds work 60-plus hours each week. Additionally, the Department has invested greatly in recruiting in recent years. In fact, our investment-per-accession has risen 36 percent since 1997 to over \$12,500; we are fielding more recruiters than we have fielded in a decade, and we offer more types of enlistment bonuses. These bonuses range from bonuses given to young people willing to ship to basic training during the hard to fill spring months to bonuses for advanced education and bonuses used to guide young people into less desirable skills. In the short-term, these solutions have paid off, but we are looking toward the future by implementing a range of test programs. One type of program, implemented by Army and Navy, recognizes the fact that nearly two-thirds of high school seniors enroll in college directly after graduation. So, these programs allow young people to complete a two-year degree, with a variety of level of financial aid, before enlisting. Another key effort is a study we commissioned with the RAND Corporation to look at the types of enlistment incentives college-oriented youth (college-bound high school students, college students, drop-outs, and stop-outs) find appealing. Programs like these coupled with continued investment will enable the Department to recruit successfully in the future.

With regard to retention, the work Congress has done in the past several years to improve the monetary and non-monetary benefits for military members has paid off. The pay raises, both across-the-board and targeted, enhancements to special and incentive pays, efforts to improve housing and reduce out of pocket housing expenses, the authorization for military members to participate in the Thrift Savings Plan and improvements in medical care and retirement reforms are among the most significant factors that have helped retain military members.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to continue this success?

I will continue to work with the Services and the Congress to field programs and resources sufficient to get the job done in manning units with the people they require.

The Services are still experiencing difficulties in retaining members with certain special skills.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to assist the Services in retaining members with special skills?

I will work with the Military Departments to take full advantage of the authorities you gave the Department in the fiscal year 2002 National Defense Authorization Act, which permits additional targeted benefits to members serving in critical skills.

Exploitation of new programs like the Montgomery GI Bill transferability, the Savings Bond reenlistment incentive, and existing bonus programs all serve to generate targeted improvements in our critical specialties. I will also work with the Services, the Joint Staff and others on the OSD staff to reduce or mitigate the effects of our high PERSTEMPO.

In response to questions relating to your confirmation as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy, you stated that you would help the Services gain access to high schools by personally and productively engaging with local education agencies, in cooperation with state agencies and the Department of Education, to ensure that the recently enacted laws regarding military recruiter access to secondary schools were followed.

Recognizing that these laws are not effective until July 2002, what steps have you taken thus far to improve military recruiter access to secondary schools students and to directory information concerning these students?

We have taken several preparatory steps. First, we have taken care to get the word out to recruiters defining their roles and responsibilities. Second, we have fielded a database that includes all high schools nationwide, including the nature of access each Service is provided, whether the school is public or private, if there is a school board policy in effect concerning recruiter access or not, and a wealth of other pertinent information. We've asked all the Services to use this database in the time leading up to July to focus on those schools that deny access. Finally, at the request of the Services, we've created a simple background paper that senior visitors may use as a guideline in planning their visits to non-compliant schools beginning in July. In addition to these steps, we're communicating with the Department of Education concerning their responsibility to advertise this legislation, which is included in the No Child Left Behind Act as well as the National Defense Authorization Act, to every high school.

Optempo/Perstempo

We continue to hear that our Armed Forces are being stretched, and that there are not enough military personnel to do all that is asked of them. Yet, the Administration has requested an increase in end strength in fiscal year 2003 only for the Marine Corps.

Do the Army, Navy, and Air Force need increases in end strength to perform their assigned missions? If so, how much of an increase for each Service?

The Services have requested consideration of increased end strengths. We are currently reviewing these requests. We are analyzing the nature and extent of the

additional requirements, and the Department's ability to accommodate them by reprioritizing functions, using civilian personnel, the Reserve Components, or commercial enterprises to perform other less critical duties. We are examining how to meet these requirements in the near term, and from a longer-range perspective such as using technology to reduce the need for manpower in certain functions, a review of current missions and our overseas presence. This issue is one of the most pressing challenges facing the Department, and is receiving our close attention.

Have military personnel been withdrawn from activities and locations to reduce optempo and perstempo? If so, describe the activities and locations from which they were withdrawn.

Secretary Rumsfeld has challenged everyone in the Department to examine every detail, task, fellowship, and assignment that diverts military personnel from performing their operational military duties. As the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy, I have been at the center of this process. We are challenging each arrangement in which a military individual is working outside the Department of Defense. At the same time, we are aggressively pursuing the Congressionally directed reductions of the management headquarters activities in order to return military personnel to operational duties. We are also examining current missions and our overseas presence to determine whether there are areas in which we can reduce the burden on the force.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense recently approved a two-phase plan to reduce significantly the mobilization requirements in support of Operation Noble Eagle/Operation Enduring Freedom.

What is the reason for this decision? What will the impact be, if any, on military operations of reducing the number of mobilized Reserve Component forces?

The Department asked the Services to conduct a mid-year review to evaluate the existing activations of National Guard and Reserve personnel. The Services were asked to aggressively review their commitments for the current level of operations and the mobilization of their reserve components, both voluntarily and involuntarily. The directive did not assign the Services any numerical goals. The review was to be mission-based. Much has changed in Operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom since October 2001. Certainly there are cases in which missions have changed, workloads have decreased, or suitable substitutes to manpower can be employed. Force changes resulting from this review should enable us to return our reserve component personnel to their homes, families and jobs. Conservation and proper use of the reserve components is a critical responsibility of the Department and one we take seriously.

Will reduced mobilization have an impact on the already high perstempo of active duty forces?

That depends largely on the nature of future missions and future call-ups, but we don't believe it will, and we are taking measures to ensure it doesn't.

Each of the Services has been asked to evaluate its existing activations of National Guard and Reserve personnel. In conducting their reviews, the Services have been asked to keep in mind that certain mission areas critical in the early stages of the operation may not be required in a steady state.

Our goal is to optimize the use of our Reserve Component forces to address both scenarios. By doing so, we will be in a better position to prosecute the war on terrorism over the long haul without adversely affecting the perstempo of our active duty forces.

Employers of some mobilized National Guard and Reserve service members were informed that their employees would be mobilized for up to a year. How does the Department believe civilian employers may react to early release of National Guard and Reserve service members?

Employers have been very supportive of reservists who have been mobilized in support of Operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom. There are employers who have demonstrated positive support of their reservists by continuing civilian pay of reservists or making up the difference between civilian salary or wage and reserve pay, continuing health coverage for family members, and continuing other benefits. Some municipalities have passed local ordinances extending wage and benefit coverage.

We believe most employers will welcome their employees back if released early. However, there may be cases where employers have made contractual arrangements for replacement labor and early return of the reservist may result in overstaffing. We must be cognizant of the employers' situation and considerate of their position.

The Services have asked for relief from the provisions for managing deployments of members contained in section 991 of Title 10, United States Code, and section 435 of title 37, United States Code. Section 574 of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2001 required the Secretary of Defense to report on the administration of section 991 of Title 10, United States Code, and to make recommendations for any revisions that the Secretary considers appropriate.

Do you recommend changes to either of these provisions for managing deployments of members?

We are not proposing changes to these provisions at this time. However, we are currently working to develop a number of recommended improvements based on our experiences to date.

Women in the Services

Press reports implied that the recent changes made by the Department of Defense to the charter for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) would restrict the activities and responsibilities of this Committee.

Please describe the changes in the DACOWITS charter and the reasons for the changes.

The DACOWITS charter was revised to reflect the realities of military service in the 21st century. The new charter sets a priority on recruiting and retaining highly qualified professional women while still considering the treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of female service members. Additionally, the charter broadens the committee's focus to include providing advice and recommendations on family issues related to the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified professional military.

These changes to the charter support the transformation of the Armed Forces for the 21st century. They are in consonance with the Department's recently completed human resource strategy and "Social Compact." Elements of the human resource strategy could significantly change the way we manage military personnel. Having the eyes and ears of DACOWITS in the field will be an important azimuth check on our efforts. Further, the new quality of life "Social Compact" modernizes the way we provide family support. DACOWITS will again serve to track our progress in this area.

Smaller changes to the charter include the following:

- The Committee shall be composed of no more than 35 members; fewer than this are expected to be appointed. The old charter stated the membership would be between 30 and 40. Appointing fewer members will help to streamline the Committee.
- Members may be allowed transportation and per diem for all Government-directed travel. This allows for installation visits to be directed and paid. To date,

members have done installation visits at their own expense and to the installations of their own choosing (usually nearest their home).

- The requirement for a minimum of two formal annual conferences has been removed. The new charter calls for two annual meetings. These meetings will be smaller and more business-like, thereby making them more efficient.
- The annual operating budget, which includes staff support, decreased from \$673,485 to \$520,000. However, with a smaller membership and the elimination of large conferences, this should not negatively impact the Committee's effectiveness.

Together, these changes will make DACOWITS more relevant for the 21st century, more effective, and more efficient.

Defend Our Freedom Act of 2002

Does the Department support a military component to a national service program?

Military service has traditionally been the cornerstone of national service, therefore the Department believes that any national service program should include a military component — one that helps, rather than hurts, the flow of volunteers and the achievement of cost-effective manning.

Please provide the Department's views on S. 2068, the Defend Our Freedom Act of 2002.

The Department supports the broad concepts of S. 2068, but has reservations about some of the specifics. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee to overcome reservations -- in particular, the development of legislation that would provide a short-term enlistment option for young Americans while preserving the viability of incentives which have proven to be cost-effective in sustaining the flow of volunteers for military service.

Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program

Over the last several years, the Department has significantly reduced the scope of the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program because of a shortage of FDA approved anthrax vaccine. The FDA has recently approved the license for the production of this vaccine, reactivating the supply of approved vaccine.

Does the Department plan to reinstate or modify the existing Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program now that increased supplies of vaccine are available?

The Food and Drug Administration's approval of the BioPort renovated facility provides not only DoD, but also the nation, with the capability of producing high quality safe and effective anthrax vaccine. The Department is currently reviewing several options to determine the most appropriate priorities and use of the vaccine.

Recoupment

In response to advance policy questions for your last confirmation hearing, you committed to review and recommend legislative changes to the many provisions of law concerning service obligations and recoupment to bring order and consistency to these requirements.

Have you conducted this review?

A review has been conducted, and it is currently being staffed within the Department.

What legislative changes do you recommend?

I do not have any specific recommendations for specific legislative changes at this time, but one approach the Department is considering would be to recommend that the numerous laws which govern the recoupment of special pays, bonuses, educational assistance, and other benefits be reformed into a single statute.

Officer Management Issues

If confirmed, what role do you expect to play in the officer promotion system?

If confirmed, I will continue to play a very active role in providing policy oversight of the officer promotion system, and I will continue to be directly responsible to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to assist him in carrying out his duties and responsibilities with regard to the officer promotion system. Having now served as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy, I am confident that the Department has a clear and detailed policy for the Military Departments to use in ensuring the integrity of the officer promotion system in choosing the best qualified officers for promotion. The Department's procedures and practices are designed specifically to provide safeguards against unauthorized influence, ensure

consistency of board practices, and provide for the active involvement of civilian officials in the process.

If confirmed, what role will you play in the general/flag officer management and nomination process?

If confirmed, I expect to remain fully engaged in the general and flag officer promotion and nomination process. I will continue to be directly responsible to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to review and monitor the Military Departments' efforts to fully implement all applicable requirements in the general and flag officer management and nomination process. I will continue to intensely scrutinize officer promotion and nomination packages that include adverse or alleged adverse information to ensure the officer nominated is qualified to assume the responsibilities of the highest grade and to perform the duties of the position he or she will fill. I also remain fully committed to ensuring the Senate Armed Services Committee is fully apprised of adverse information and notified when alleged adverse information becomes known concerning an officer who is pending confirmation.

Armed Forces Retirement Homes

What progress has the Department made in implementing the changes in organization for the Armed Forces Retirement Homes (AFRH) authorized in the FY 2002 Defense Authorization Act?

We are proceeding with the recruitment of a Chief Operating Officer (COO), and expect to fill the position this summer. The AFRH has contracted with an executive search firm with extensive experience in recruitment of Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) professionals to conduct the recruitment process. In the interim, we continue to work closely with the AFRH Board to ensure continued oversight of Home management and a smooth transition to the COO.

In addition, we have solicited active duty military nominees for the Director, AFRH-Washington position from the Military Departments. The Air Force and the Navy chose to defer to the Army nomination, which is currently being staffed within the Department for final appointment by the Secretary of Defense.

Will the Department implement the previous authorized increase in the monthly contribution from 50 cents to one dollar?

The 2002 Congressional appropriation of \$5.2 million to the AFRH Trust Fund has enabled further review of the options that are available to secure the long-term financial solvency of the Home. All feasible strategies to ensure the Home's financial

security are being weighed carefully. The Congress can be assured that the Home's future viability has my full attention and my commitment to ensuring an appropriate and timely solution.

Have you identified additional areas in which improvements can be made to address the solvency of the Homes?

The AFRH has responded to declining levels of revenues to the AFRH Trust Fund in a variety of ways, seeking to reduce costs and infuse new funds to stem the tide of insolvency. Actions have been taken to downsize the total capacity of the Homes from that of the early 1990's, and to implement efficiencies of operations. In spite of inflation and annual increases in civil service salaries, operations and maintenance funding for the AFRH has steadily declined from Fiscal Year 1995 to the present. The AFRH has undergone a Most Efficient Organization study over the last two years that has resulted in reductions in personnel and additional savings and efficiencies.

The AFRH has actively sought to lease 49 acres of undeveloped land adjacent to the AFRH-Washington campus. While this effort has taken too much time, we are proceeding in a deliberate manner recognizing that each decision faces the high probability of a legal challenge. In addition, the AFRH-Washington has leased a number of unused facilities on campus to other government organizations, including the Smithsonian and the Army Corps of Engineers, and continues to seek suitable tenants for other unused buildings. The AFRH has partnered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation for the refurbishment of the former Anderson Cottage, resulting in a cost avoidance in maintenance for this historic structure.

Both Homes currently operate at well below capacity, due primarily to prior renovations and uncertainty of the financial future of the Home. The AFRH has developed new marketing materials and strategies to inform potential residents of what the Home has to offer, with the hope of increasing income from resident fees. The AFRH has also worked with the Military Departments to increase voluntary allotments from military retirees and has fostered opportunity for donations through the Armed Forces Retirement Home Foundation.

Compensation for Service Members in Korea

The Commander of U.S. forces in Korea, General Schwartz, came before this Committee on March 5th and described the difficulty the Army has in persuading mid-career officers to accept command of units in Korea. General Schwartz has urged increases in the pay and allowances given to service members in Korea to address this problem.

What are your views about the adequacy of compensation for military members, both officer and enlisted, assigned to Korea?

It is the Department's philosophy that military pay should rise as members perform duty away from their families, serve in overseas areas with a significantly lower quality-of-life, or serve in positions that place them directly in harm's way.

Pay for members in Korea reflects the fact that members serve there in a permanent versus deployed temporary duty status. This means that members in Korea do not receive a temporary duty per diem allowance, unlike their counterparts serving in areas such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. To illustrate, an E-6 with 12 years of service, who is assigned to an unaccompanied tour of duty in Korea outside of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), is paid \$150 more per month than the same member serving in the continental United States (CONUS). If the same individual were assigned duty in the DMZ, he would receive \$250 more per month than his CONUS counterpart.

What steps do you recommend to address the issues raised by General Schwartz?

Army leadership is currently working with General Schwartz to determine if there is an adequacy-of-pay issue in Korea. Should that review support changes in compensation for members in Korea, we will work to accommodate such changes. Our joint goal is to ensure that compensation, quality of life, quality of service, and personnel management needs for those in Korea fit that situation, as well as fit those military personnel similarly situated around the globe.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

Do you agree, if confirmed for this high position, to appear before this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress?

Yes.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness?

Yes.

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate Committees?

Yes.