

Joint Staff. Army Lieutenant General Jack N. Merritt, recently nominated as Joint Staff Director, has a desirable background for strategic and force planning. He graduated from the Air (not Army) Command and Staff College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces; has served as a systems analyst in OSD; as Deputy Director of Program Analysis for the NSC; was Commandant of the Army War College; and has a "purple suit" reputation (a slang term used to identify U.S. military officers who believe in interservice team play).

The Joint Chiefs are establishing a system to identify officers formerly assigned to the Joint Staff, and will request repetitive tours for those best qualified. They also are constructing a training program to prepare newcomers.

Statutory limitations on tenure with the Joint Staff are presently seen as severe. Peacetime tours may not exceed three years (curtailments and early retirements reduce the average to less than 30 months for "action officers"; generals and admirals average 24). The Director may not return thereafter in any capacity. Others must remain away at least three years, with 30 exceptions approved by the SECDEF. Law also limits the Joint Staff to 400 commissioned members. An additional 280 assigned to the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS) do not count against that statutory total, but additional slots would be required if the JCS assumed force planning responsibilities outlined in Phase III.

The Joint Chiefs therefore seriously consider recommending that the SECDEF ask Congress to lift legal ceilings on Joint Staff size and length of tenure, to afford flexibility always allowed the staffs of each U.S. Military Service.