

In addition, I am troubled by the concept in one of the proposals for a National Command Authority under the control of a Chief of Staff who serves as the principal adviser to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. I think it is worth considering whether so much has changed since 1949 that we should be willing to overturn the Congressional admonition in section 2 of the National Security Act against "a single Chief of Staff over the armed forces" and "an overall armed forces general staff." Although we can be grateful that the American military tradition differs from that in many other countries by its consistent respect for civilian authority, the wise exercise of civilian authority is dependent on the soundness of the advice it receives from its highest ranking military officers. The stifling of divergent viewpoints through the homogenizing processes of a National Command Authority, speaking through a Chief of Staff, may deprive civilian authority of the information it needs to make the best national security choices for the American people.

In summary, it is the position of the Department of Defense, supported by the current Joint Chiefs of Staff, that improvements in the operation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the extent they are necessary, can and should come primarily from management initiatives undertaken within the current statutory framework. Legislative changes should be limited to those recommended in the DoD proposal. Before adopting any of the more dramatic proposals for reorganization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is our view that this approach should be tested. In an area of such extreme sensitivity under the Constitution as civilian control of the armed forces, we should move cautiously in tinkering with institutional arrangements that have served this nation well in the past. Positive actions are being taken to enhance the operation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I believe that these actions will be much more effective if Congress passes the Administration's legislative proposal.

Sincerely,



*We appreciated the very good meeting last year & your committee*