

c. Add a new paragraph to make the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, a regular member of the National Security Council. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff have long been responsible for advising the NSC, they have never had a representative of their own at the meetings. The Chairman has normally attended at the invitation of the Secretary of Defense.

In combination, these three changes should clarify and strengthen the position of the Chairman and thereby facilitate the job of General Vessey in carrying out his in-house reform program. In addition, I should think Congress would want to check periodically on the progress of this program and seek evidence that adequate military advice is reaching the President and the Secretary of Defense in the policy-making stage as well as during policy execution. This could be accomplished to some degree by requiring at appropriate times detailed answers from the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the following questions regarding military policy:

- a. What are the threats to national security which are deemed so urgent as to require ready military force to cope with them?
- b. To provide this military force, what are the strategic tasks for which our Armed Forces should be prepared?
- c. How will the major items of the next military budget contribute to these tasks?
- d. What advice has the Joint Chiefs of Staff rendered in formulating the foregoing answers?

A final word about the Skelton bill, H.R. 2560. Although unhappily its time may not have come, it contains many features worthy of continuing study and further development. One of the most important is the role of the Secretary of Defense in the chain of command in contrast to his role as Secretary of the Department of Defense. In the latter, he is unquestionably "the principal assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department of Defense." But what is he in the chain of command where he wears another hat? Conceivably, he could be "the principal assistant to the Commander in Chief in all matters relating to the chain of command." Or he might be a Deputy to the Commander in Chief with such duties as the latter might assign. A third possibility is for him to be an independent command authority in the chain just below the President, responsible to him for the combatant commands and all that they do.

Today, no one can give an authoritative answer to these questions. Until an official decision is reached as to what is expected of the Secretary of Defense in the chain of command, particularly in time of war, we are not ready to decide many of the issues involved in a thorough reorganization of the JCS. Anything this committee can do to eliminate the present uncertainties regarding the Secretary will be a major contribution to national security.

Mr. NICHOLS. It appears to me that we may be moving a little closer toward some sort of consensus on the Joint Chief of Staff reform.

Last year, for example, the administration, in refusing to submit a proposal, generally supported the status quo. This year, we have an administration proposal. Though it is very modest, it seems to move in the direction that has been urged by critics of the present JCS organization.

You, General, whose judgment we certainly respect, on the other hand advocated rather far-reaching reforms last year.

Today, however, from your statement, it appears to me that you may have acknowledged that the original proposal probably was not politically feasible, whatever its merits may have been.

As a consequence, you seem to have focused your testimony on strengthening the present Joint Chiefs of Staff in the recommendations you brought to us; and, as a result, it seems to me that the gulf between the poles of differing opinion may have been somewhat narrowed.

The central issue, as I see it, from your testimony, and from testimony of others, is the question: What should be the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?