

Chairman. Several reasons convinced the Committee that the Vice Chairman must be given this authority and standing if he is to play a meaningful role in strengthening the JCS institution.

First, with the authority and standing specified in this bill, the Vice Chairman would improve continuity and stability in the exercise of the Chairman's responsibilities. Unlike the Service Chiefs, the Vice Chairman would be immersed full-time in the same operational work of the Defense Department that preoccupies the Chairman. On the other hand, most of the time and energy of the Service Chiefs are understandably dedicated to the administrative work of the Department: managing the tremendous resources of the military Services. During the 3-month period in which he is designated to act for the Chairman in his absence, a Service Chief does his best to familiarize himself with key issues and events. However, he just cannot become as knowledgeable as the Vice Chairman, who would be concerned with these issues and events on a continuous basis.

Further complicating a Service Chief's ability to rapidly assume the Chairman's duties is his more limited familiarity with the personnel and procedures of the Joint Staff. In the course of carrying out his normal JCS responsibilities, a Service Chief tends to rely heavily on his own staff for assistance. However, it is the Joint Staff, and not his Service staff, with which he would have to work as acting Chairman. Again, the Vice Chairman would already enjoy a well-established relationship with the multi-Service staff that supports the Chairman.

A final factor affecting continuity and stability in the role of acting Chairman is the extremely heavy burden that a Service Chief must assume when he is serving as acting Chairman. In that difficult position, a Service Chief must essentially perform two full-time jobs that separately already consume the time and energy of highly-qualified, dynamic individuals.

A second reason for the Vice Chairman recommended by the Committee is his ability to expedite the constant flow of JCS business in the absence of the Chairman. Current and former unified combatant commanders and Directors of the Joint Staff have told the Committee of their deep reluctance to raise issues with the JCS in the Chairman's absence. They are concerned that without the unique broad and joint perspective and leadership of the Chairman, matters may not receive the full and objective consideration that they deserve. Such issues do not include only the major policy questions for which the Chairman should be present; they also include personnel matters and other administrative problems that directly affect the prerogatives of the military Services.

Third, the Committee believes that the acting Chairman should fully understand the capabilities of the unified and specified combatant commands. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff serves as the crucial link between the unified and specified combatant commanders and the Secretary of Defense, especially in crisis situations. Therefore, the Chairman and the officer acting in his absence should be familiar with the unified and specified combatant commands through extensive travel among them and daily exposure to their questions, concerns, and requests. Only a Vice Chair-