

§ 161. Definitions

In this chapter:

(1) "Unified combatant command" means a command which has broad, continuing missions and which is composed of combatant forces from two or more military departments.

(2) "Specified combatant command" means a command which has broad, continuing missions and which is composed of combatant forces from a single military department.

(3) "Combatant command" means a unified combatant command or a specified combatant command.

(4) "Combatant forces" means those forces of the armed forces whose primary mission is to engage in combat.

§ 162. Combatant commands: establishment; composition; functions

(a) *With the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President, through the Secretary of Defense, shall—*

(1) *establish unified combatant commands and specified combatant commands to perform military missions;*

(2) *prescribe the force structure of those commands;*

(3) *review periodically, but not less often than every two years, the missions, tasks, responsibilities (including geographic boundaries), and force structure of each combatant command and revise such missions, tasks, responsibilities, and force structures as may be necessary to respond to changing conditions; and*

(4) *notify Congress, except during time of hostilities or imminent threat of hostilities, at least 60 days before (A) establishing a new combatant command, or (B) significantly revising the missions, tasks, responsibilities, or force structure of an existing combatant command.*

(b)(1) *Unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of Defense, all combatant forces of the military departments shall be assigned to combatant commands, established under this section, to perform the missions of those commands.*

(2) *Consistent with the force structure prescribed by the President for each combatant command, the Secretary of each military department, with the approval of the Secretary of Defense, shall assign combatant forces of his department to combatant commands.*

(3) *A combatant force so assigned may be transferred from the command to which it is assigned only by authority of the Secretary of Defense and only under procedures prescribed by the Secretary and approved by the President.*

(c) *Combatant commands established under this section are responsible to the President and to the Secretary of Defense for the performance of such military missions as may be assigned to such commands by the Secretary with the approval of the President.*

§ 163. Operational chain of command

(a) *Unless otherwise directed by the President, the chain of command for the operational direction of the combatant commands runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands.*