

GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE,  
*Washington, DC, October 18, 1985.*

Hon. LES ASPIN,  
*Chairman, Committee on Armed Services,  
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: During recent months, a number of legislative proposals involving changes to the structure of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been developed. Most recently, a bill sponsored by Representatives Nichols, Skelton, and yourself was reported out by the Subcommittee on Surveys and Investigations of the House Armed Services Committee and is pending action by the full Committee. If enacted, the bill would have a major impact upon the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the JCS role as principal military advisers to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. In a related action, the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee has recently completed work on a comprehensive report that is expected to result in legislative proposals involving far reaching modification to defense organization, including revisions in the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Since assuming office in 1981, Secretary Weinberger has taken a number of significant actions to streamline DoD systems and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of management arrangements. Most importantly, he has endeavored to place the best people available in key civilian and military positions. Where it has made sense to do so, he has complemented these individuals with corresponding changes in procedures and organizations.

In addition, the Secretary has made a concerted effort to improve the procedures for obtaining joint military advice in the defense decision process. He is quite satisfied with the quality of the military advice currently being provided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He has taken steps to expand the frequency and scope of communications with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in order to take greater advantage of this advice and counsel. Under this arrangement, both the President and the Secretary have access to the unconstrained views and concerns of the Service Chiefs who have the responsibility for organizing, training, and equipping the forces assigned to the combatant commands. This ensures that the National Command Authorities hear the advice of, and can choose among, alternatives developed by the most competent military authorities.

The JCS have also made a number of improvements, ranging from better staffing procedures to enhanced joint operations planning. In addition, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, each member of the JCS, and the Commanders-in-Chief of the Unified and Specified Commands play increasingly important roles in the deliberations of the Defense Resources Board.

On July 15, 1985, the President established the Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management to study the complete range of defense management policies and procedures, including organizational and operational arrangements among the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Unified and Specified Commands, and the Military Departments. The Commission is chaired by former Deputy Secretary of Defense, David Packard. The Blue Ribbon Commission's report, which is due