

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

On February 3, 1982, Gen. David C. Jones, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a hearing before the committee, announced his concern about basic shortcomings in the organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). He further stated that he intended to submit proposals to correct those shortcomings and would work to achieve their acceptance in the remaining months of his tenure and thereafter. Subsequently, Gen. Edward C. Meyer, the Army Chief of Staff, joined General Jones in criticizing the present structure and suggested that the chairman had not gone far enough in his recommendations for change.

As a result of the proposals of General Jones and General Meyer, the Investigations Subcommittee began hearings on JCS reorganization on April 21, 1982. The subcommittee received testimony from more than 40 witnesses, including the chairman and all current members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, former Secretaries of Defense, former Deputy Secretaries of Defense, former chairmen and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, former Directors of the Joint Staff, commanders of unified commands, and other civilian and military witnesses.

The subcommittee found near unanimous agreement that organizational problems hamper the performance of the present organization. But it received a wide range of views on what, if anything, should be done to correct the existing deficiencies. The recommendations varied from leaving the current organization unchanged to replacing it with a single Chief of Staff who would head a joint military staff and act as the military advisor to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

The hearings resulted in a bill intended to overcome the most pressing JCS organizational problems. The bill was reported by the committee and passed the House of Representatives on August 16, 1982. The Senate held a hearing on the bill; however, no further action was taken by the Senate during the 97th Congress.

In 1983 the Administration developed a position and submitted a legislative proposal that was introduced as H.R. 3145. The Investigations Subcommittee again held hearings and reported a bill, H.R. 3718, that accepted all of the Administration recommendations and incorporated the essential elements of the original bill passed by the House of Representatives. Once again, the JCS bill passed the House. In 1984, when it became clear that the Senate would not act on free-standing JCS legislation during the 98th Congress, the fiscal year 1985 Defense authorization bill was amended to include the substance of H.R. 3718. Several provisions of H.R. 3718 were accepted in the House-Senate conference and were enacted. The 1984 changes constituted the first significant, though relatively modest, modifications to the structure of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in more than two decades.

The provisions enacted in 1984 made the JCS chairman the spokesman on operational requirements of the unified and specified commanders, increased the tour of duty of Joint Staff officers from three to four years, reduced to two years the minimum time between assignments of an officer to the Joint Staff and removed the three year limit on the tour of duty of the Joint Staff director.