

As a result of the proposals of General Jones and General Meyer, the committee began hearings on JCS reorganization on April 21, 1982. The committee 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. Although the hearings focused on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the committee received disturbing testimony indicating the existence of severe problems in the organization of the unified and specified commands, the joint officer personnel management system, the office of the Secretary of Defense, and other elements of the defense structure.

With regard to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the committee 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 (H.R. 6954) 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 committee 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 the meantime, the Senate Armed Services Committee initiated a comprehensive review of the overall structure of the Department of Defense in June 1983. The Senate approach was based on the view that the interrelationships among major Department of Defense organizations preclude focusing on the JCS structure in isolation. The Senate Armed Services Committee held a series of 12 hearings and received testimony from 31 witnesses in 1983. The committee staff was directed to undertake a comprehensive study of the organization and decision-making procedures of the Department of Defense and the Congress. That study effort continued throughout 1984 and 1985.

In 1984, after determining 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 adopted 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.