

Sec. 163. Role of Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Senate amendment contained a provision (section 112) that would authorize the Secretary of Defense to assign responsibility to the JCS Chairman for overseeing the activities of the combatant commands. This provision would also specify that such an assignment to the JCS Chairman, however, would not (1) confer any command authority, or (2) alter the direct responsibility of the combatant commanders to the Secretary of Defense.

The House amendment contained a provision (section 101) that would specify that the JCS Chairman, subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, supervises the combatant commanders.

The House recedes. The conferees agreed that this authority would provide the Secretary of Defense with a means of providing for the more effective control and coordination of the combatant commands. Because the Secretary's span of control is great and the time that he can devote to supervisory activities is limited, the conferees believe that the JCS Chairman could usefully assist the Secretary in overseeing the combatant commands.

The conferees have purposely framed this provision to allow the Secretary of Defense complete latitude in defining the JCS Chairman's oversight role. The conferees believe that the Chairman's oversight of the combatant commanders should assume whatever character the Secretary of Defense considers appropriate. The conferees intend that the Chairman act only as the Secretary's agent in exercising oversight; that is, for and on behalf of the Secretary, and only by his authority. The conferees contemplate, however, that the Secretary would employ the Chairman in oversight capacities such as coordinating matters that involve two or more combatant commanders, directing the combatant commanders' submissions of requirements, overseeing the state of readiness of each combatant command, and verifying the execution of orders issued by the President and the Secretary of Defense.

The Senate amendment contained a provision (section 112) that would reenact with amendments subsection (c)(2) of the current section 124 of title 10 that designates the JCS Chairman, subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, as the spokesman for the combatant commanders on their operational requirements. This provision would specify activities of the JCS Chairman in performing his responsibility as spokesman for the combatant commanders.

The House amendment contained a provision (section 101) that would provide that the JCS Chairman, subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, is the spokesman of the commanders of the combatant commands at the seat of Government.

The House recedes with an amendment to provide that the JCS Chairman will serve as the spokesman for the combatant commanders on all requirements of their commands, but especially on operational requirements.