

of Pub. L. 115-232, set out as a note preceding section 3001 of this title.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSIGNMENT OF FORCES TO
COMBATANT COMMANDS

Pub. L. 99-433, title II, §214(a), Oct. 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 1018, provided that section 162(a) of this title shall be implemented not later than 90 days after Oct. 1, 1986.

§ 163. Role of Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff

(a) COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH CHAIRMAN OF JCS; ASSIGNMENT OF DUTIES.—Subject to the limitations in section 152(c) of this title, the President may—

(1) direct that communications between the President or the Secretary of Defense and the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands be transmitted through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and

(2) assign duties to the Chairman to assist the President and the Secretary of Defense in performing their command function.

(b) OVERSIGHT BY CHAIRMAN OF JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF.—(1) The Secretary of Defense may assign to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff responsibility for overseeing the activities of the combatant commands. Such assignment by the Secretary to the Chairman does not confer any command authority on the Chairman and does not alter the responsibility of the commanders of the combatant commands prescribed in section 164(b)(2) of this title.

(2) Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff serves as the spokesman for the commanders of the combatant commands, especially on the operational requirements of their commands. In performing such function, the Chairman shall—

(A) confer with and obtain information from the commanders of the combatant commands with respect to the requirements of their commands;

(B) evaluate and integrate such information;

(C) advise and make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense with respect to the requirements of the combatant commands, individually and collectively; and

(D) communicate, as appropriate, the requirements of the combatant commands to other elements of the Department of Defense.

(Added Pub. L. 99-433, title II, §211(a), Oct. 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 1013.)

§ 164. Commanders of combatant commands: assignment; powers and duties

(a) ASSIGNMENT AS COMBATANT COMMANDER.—

(1) The President may assign an officer to serve as the commander of a unified or specified combatant command only if the officer—

(A) has the joint specialty under section 661 of this title; and

(B) has completed a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment (as defined in section 664(d) of this title) as a general or flag officer.

(2) The President may waive paragraph (1) in the case of an officer if the President determines that such action is necessary in the national interest.

(b) RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMBATANT COMMANDERS.—(1) The commander of a combatant

command is responsible to the President and to the Secretary of Defense for the performance of missions assigned to that command by the President or by the Secretary with the approval of the President.

(2) Subject to the direction of the President, the commander of a combatant command—

(A) performs his duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense; and

(B) is directly responsible to the Secretary for the preparedness of the command to carry out missions assigned to the command.

(3) Among the full range of command responsibilities specified in subsection (c) and as provided for in section 161 of this title, the primary duties of the commander of a combatant command shall be as follows:

(A) To produce plans for the employment of the armed forces to execute national defense strategies and respond to significant military contingencies.

(B) To take actions, as necessary, to deter conflict.

(C) To command United States armed forces as directed by the Secretary and approved by the President.

(c) COMMAND AUTHORITY OF COMBATANT COMMANDERS.—(1) Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense, the authority, direction, and control of the commander of a combatant command with respect to the commands and forces assigned to that command include the command functions of—

(A) giving authoritative direction to subordinate commands and forces necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command, including authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics;

(B) prescribing the chain of command to the commands and forces within the command;

(C) organizing commands and forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command;

(D) employing forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command;

(E) assigning command functions to subordinate commanders;

(F) coordinating and approving those aspects of administration and support (including control of resources and equipment, internal organization, and training) and discipline necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command; and

(G) exercising the authority with respect to selecting subordinate commanders, selecting combatant command staff, suspending subordinates, and convening courts-martial, as provided in subsections (e), (f), and (g) of this section and section 822(a) of this title, respectively.

(2)(A) The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that a commander of a combatant command has sufficient authority, direction, and control over the commands and forces assigned to the command to exercise effective command over those commands and forces. In carrying out this subparagraph, the Secretary shall consult with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(B) The Secretary shall periodically review and, after consultation with the Secretaries of the military departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commander of the combatant command, assign authority to the commander of the combatant command for those aspects of administration and support that the Secretary considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command.

(3) If a commander of a combatant command at any time considers his authority, direction, or control with respect to any of the commands or forces assigned to the command to be insufficient to command effectively, the commander shall promptly inform the Secretary of Defense.

(d) **AUTHORITY OVER SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS.**—Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense—

(1) commanders of commands and forces assigned to a combatant command are under the authority, direction, and control of, and are responsible to, the commander of the combatant command on all matters for which the commander of the combatant command has been assigned authority under subsection (c);

(2) the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) shall communicate with other elements of the Department of Defense on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has been assigned authority under subsection (c) in accordance with procedures, if any, established by the commander of the combatant command;

(3) other elements of the Department of Defense shall communicate with the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has been assigned authority under subsection (c) in accordance with procedures, if any, established by the commander of the combatant command; and

(4) if directed by the commander of the combatant command, the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) shall advise the commander of the combatant command of all communications to and from other elements of the Department of Defense on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has not been assigned authority under subsection (c).

(e) **SELECTION OF SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS.**—

(1) An officer may be assigned to a position as the commander of a command directly subordinate to the commander of a combatant command or, in the case of such a position that is designated under section 601 of this title as a position of importance and responsibility, may be recommended to the President for assignment to that position, only—

(A) with the concurrence of the commander of the combatant command; and

(B) in accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense.

(2) The Secretary of Defense may waive the requirement under paragraph (1) for the concurrence of the commander of a combatant command with regard to the assignment (or recommendation for assignment) of a particular officer if the Secretary of Defense determines that such action is in the national interest.

(3) The commander of a combatant command shall—

(A) evaluate the duty performance of each commander of a command directly subordinate to the commander of such combatant command; and

(B) submit the evaluation to the Secretary of the military department concerned and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(4)(A) At least one deputy commander of the combatant command the geographic area of responsibility of which includes the United States shall be—

(i) a qualified officer of a reserve component who is eligible for promotion to the grade of lieutenant general or, in the case of the Navy, vice admiral; or

(ii) a qualified officer of the Space Force whose prior service includes service in a space force active status other than sustained duty and who is eligible for promotion to the grade of lieutenant general.

(B) The requirement in subparagraph (A) does not apply when the officer serving as commander of the combatant command described in that subparagraph is (i) a reserve component officer, or (ii) an officer of the Space Force whose prior service includes service in a space force active status other than sustained duty.

(f) **COMBATANT COMMAND STAFF.**—(1) Each unified and specified combatant command shall have a staff to assist the commander of the command in carrying out his responsibilities. Positions of responsibility on the combatant command staff shall be filled by officers from each of the armed forces having significant forces assigned to the command.

(2) An officer may be assigned to a position on the staff of a combatant command or, in the case of such a position that is designated under section 601 of this title as a position of importance and responsibility, may be recommended to the President for assignment to that position, only—

(A) with the concurrence of the commander of such command; and

(B) in accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense.

(3) The Secretary of Defense may waive the requirement under paragraph (2) for the concurrence of the commander of a combatant command with regard to the assignment (or recommendation for assignment) of a particular officer to serve on the staff of the combatant command if the Secretary of Defense determines that such action is in the national interest.

(g) **AUTHORITY TO SUSPEND SUBORDINATES.**—In accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense, the commander of a combatant command may suspend from duty and recommend the reassignment of any officer assigned to such combatant command.

(h) **SUPPORT TO CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF.**—The commander of a combatant command shall provide such information to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as may be necessary for the Chairman to perform the duties of the Chairman under section 153 of this title.

(Added Pub. L. 99-433, title II, §211(a), Oct. 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 1013; amended Pub. L. 100-456, div.

A, title V, § 519(a)(2), Sept. 29, 1988, 102 Stat. 1972; Pub. L. 110–181, div. A, title XVIII, § 1824(b), Jan. 28, 2008, 122 Stat. 501; Pub. L. 114–328, div. A, title V, § 516, title IX, § 921(e), Dec. 23, 2016, 130 Stat. 2113, 2354; Pub. L. 115–91, div. A, title X, § 1081(a)(10), Dec. 12, 2017, 131 Stat. 1594; Pub. L. 118–31, div. A, title XVII, § 1722(a)(3), Dec. 22, 2023, 137 Stat. 667.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

2023—Subsec. (e)(4). Pub. L. 118–31 designated existing provisions as subpar. (A), substituted “shall be—” and cls. (i) and (ii) for “shall be a qualified officer of a reserve component of the armed forces who is eligible for promotion to the grade of O–9, unless a reserve component officer is serving as commander of that combatant command.”, and added subpar. (B).

2017—Subsec. (a)(1)(B). Pub. L. 115–91 substituted “section 664(d)” for “section 664(f)”.

2016—Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 114–328, § 921(e)(1), added par. (3).

Subsec. (e)(4). Pub. L. 114–328, § 516, substituted “a reserve component of the armed forces” for “the National Guard” and “a reserve component officer” for “a National Guard officer”.

Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 114–328, § 921(e)(2), added subsec. (h).

2008—Subsec. (e)(4). Pub. L. 110–181 added par. (4).

1988—Subsec. (a)(1)(B). Pub. L. 100–456 substituted “completed a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment (as defined in section 664(f) of this title)” for “served in at least one joint duty assignment (as defined under section 668(b) of this title)”.

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Pub. L. 99–433, title II, § 214(c), Oct. 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 1019, provided that: “Subsections (e), (f), and (g) of section 164 of title 10, United States Code (as added by section 211 of this Act), shall take effect at the end of the 90-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act [Oct. 1, 1986], or on such earlier date as may be prescribed by the Secretary of Defense.”

CONSIDERATION OF RESERVE COMPONENT OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO CERTAIN COMMAND POSITIONS

Pub. L. 112–81, div. A, title V, § 518, Dec. 31, 2011, 125 Stat. 1397, provided that: “Whenever officers of the Armed Forces are considered for appointment to the position of Commander, Army North Command or Commander, Air Force North Command, fully qualified officers of the National Guard and the Reserves shall be considered for appointment to such position.”

SENSE OF CONGRESS

Pub. L. 110–181, div. A, title XVIII, § 1824(a), Jan. 28, 2008, 122 Stat. 501, provided that: “It is the sense of Congress that, whenever officers of the Armed Forces are considered for promotion to the grade of lieutenant general, or vice admiral in the case of the Navy, on the active duty list, officers in the reserve components of the Armed Forces who are eligible for promotion to such grade should be considered for promotion to such grade.”

WAIVER OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR ASSIGNMENT AS COMBATANT COMMANDER

Pub. L. 99–433, title II, § 214(b), Oct. 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 1018, authorized President, until Oct. 1, 1990, to waive, on a case-by-case basis, certain requirements provided for in subsec. (a) of this section relating to assignment of commanders of combatant commands.

§ 165. Combatant commands: administration and support

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense, with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, shall provide for the administration and support of forces assigned to each combatant command.

(b) RESPONSIBILITY OF SECRETARIES OF MILITARY DEPARTMENTS.—Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense and subject to the authority of commanders of the combatant commands under section 164(c) of this title, the Secretary of a military department is responsible for the administration and support of forces assigned by him to a combatant command.

(c) ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHER COMPONENTS OF DOD.—After consultation with the Secretaries of the military departments, the Secretary of Defense may assign the responsibility (or any part of the responsibility) for the administration and support of forces assigned to the combatant commands to other components of the Department of Defense (including Defense Agencies and combatant commands). A component assigned such a responsibility shall discharge that responsibility subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense and subject to the authority of commanders of the combatant commands under section 164(c) of this title.

(Added Pub. L. 99–433, title II, § 211(a), Oct. 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 1016.)

§ 166. Combatant commands: budget proposals

(a) COMBATANT COMMAND BUDGETS.—The Secretary of Defense shall include in the annual budget of the Department of Defense submitted to Congress a separate budget proposal for such activities of each of the unified and specified combatant commands as may be determined under subsection (b).

(b) CONTENT OF PROPOSALS.—A budget proposal under subsection (a) for funding of activities of a combatant command shall include funding proposals for such activities of the combatant command as the Secretary (after consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) determines to be appropriate for inclusion. Activities of a combatant command for which funding may be requested in such a proposal include the following:

- (1) Joint exercises.
- (2) Force training.
- (3) Contingencies.
- (4) Selected operations.

(c) SOF TRAINING WITH FOREIGN FORCES.—A funding proposal for force training under subsection (b)(2) may include amounts for training expense payments authorized in section 322 of this title.

(Added Pub. L. 99–433, title II, § 211(a), Oct. 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 1016; amended Pub. L. 102–190, div. A, title X, § 1052(b), Dec. 5, 1991, 105 Stat. 1471; Pub. L. 115–91, div. A, title X, § 1081(a)(11), Dec. 12, 2017, 131 Stat. 1594.)