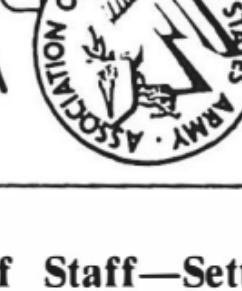


Defense Report

AUSA



The Joint Chiefs of Staff—Setting Their Own House in Order

Ever since the outgoing chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested revisions in the JCS organization and operating procedures more than a year ago, "military reformers" in Congress and elsewhere have been calling for changes in the nation's military command structure. Proposals have ranged from evolutionary to revolutionary, from relatively minor amendments of operating procedures to the abolition, or complete restructuring, of the organization.

Now we have heard from the Joint Chiefs themselves in testimony before a congressional subcommittee on the subjects of reorganizing and refranchising their responsibilities. Gen. John W. Vessey Jr., their chairman, presented a thoughtful, reasoned expression of those responsibilities, the relationships of the JCS with other government officials, particularly the President and the commanders in chief (the CINCs) of the worldwide unified and specified commands, and the relationship each member of the JCS has with the other members.

His statement was a refreshing revelation that the chiefs, individually and collectively, have addressed the criticisms leveled at their organization and have proposed practical and sensible adjustments to their charter and their methods of operation. They presented sound, unanimous recommendations that should give pause to the reformers and armchair analysts who have proposed major, even drastic, changes to the current system.

The chiefs recognize that improvements can be made; in fact, they have been making them. They incorporated the CINCs more directly in the resource-allocation struggle. They have broadened their contacts with the secretary of defense and the President. They have forced themselves to look collectively at the threat, strategy and application of resources to the whole problem of military preparedness and acknowledged the need to decide issues for the corporate good.

The JCS should be commended for their initiatives and their recommendations. Those who are bent on reform should heed the thoughts of these senior military leaders and give time for their proposals to be tested before embarking on a course which will bring radical changes.