



# WASHINGTON UPDATE



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**Clinton signs defense authorization bill.** President Clinton signed a \$268 billion defense authorization bill in mid-November even though it endangers fulfilling his campaign promise to save jobs at two depots scheduled for closing in Texas and California.

White House officials would not elaborate on Clinton signing the bill.

The legislation gives Clinton the power to kill the B-2 bomber program, requires him to give Congress a detailed report before extending U.S. troop deployment to Bosnia beyond June 30.

It also fully funds the F-22, FA-18 E and F and Joint Strike Fighters, and adds \$720 million for a fourth Aegis destroyer.

Before the 1996 election, Clinton promised voters in Texas and California that he would preserve jobs at McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento, Calif., and Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio, by allowing private contractors to continue on site after the bases closed.

The legislation he signed does not allow that.

The dispute over the future of the depots delayed congressional approval beyond the start of the new fiscal year Oct. 1.

**Authorization bill allows expansion of TRICARE prime radius.** Congress is directing the Defense Department to draft a plan to expand TRICARE Plus, the health maintenance organization option of TRICARE, beyond the 40-mile service area of a military hospital or clinic.

In addition, Congress wants the department to estimate the cost of providing cash payments to military families to buy health care where there are no health care provider networks.

To expand coverage, TRICARE officials said they would need to create a network of participating physicians and obtain necessary approval to do so in the regional contracts that establish TRICARE coverage.

**Key items in authorization bill.** Here are some of the key items in the Fiscal Year 1998 Defense Authorization Bill:

- 2.8 percent pay increase in basic pay and drill pay effective Jan. 1.
- Combine Basic Allowance for Quarters and Variable Housing allowance for servicemembers into single payment effective Jan. 1.
- Subsistence allowance for all servicemembers effective Jan. 1, but phased in over four years.
- Boost family separation allowance to \$100 a month effective immediately.
- Boost hazardous duty pay to \$150 a month effective immediately.
- Create two new assistants at two-star rank to advise chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on National Guard and Reserve issues.
- Cut staff of the Office of the Secretary of Defense by 2,500 positions over the next five years.
- Create a 10-member commission, appointed by leaders of the Armed Services Committee to examine gender integration in basic training.

This commission will also review policies concerning fraternization and adultery.

The commission is to make its first report April 15.

## **Pentagon unveils Defense Reform Initiative.**

The two top civilian leaders of the Defense Department unveiled the Pentagon's Defense Reform Initiative in early November to conduct business as efficiently as American industry.

There are four key tenets to the initiatives: eliminate excess infrastructure; open up functions done in-house to civilian competition; consolidate organizations to eliminate redundancies and shift duties back to the field from the Office of the Secretary of Defense; and adopt industry's most effective management techniques.

Many of the program changes called for by Defense Secretary William Cohen and Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre do not need congressional approval.

A key element of the estimated \$6 billion annual savings from these initiatives rest on two new rounds of base closures in 2001 and 2005.

Congress rejected recommendations of the Quadrennial Defense Review to approve two rounds of closure during the last session.

**Key points of the initiative.** Here are some key points of Defense Reform Initiative beyond two rounds of base closures in 2001 and 2005:

- About 30,000 administrative jobs will be eliminated over the next five years; almost all will be civilians.
- Office of Secretary of Defense will shrink by 1,000 over the next 18 months; the number of people reporting to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will shrink by 750 over the same time.
- Field activities of the Defense Department will shrink by 3,000 people over two years. All headquarters staff will be reduced by 10 percent over five years.
- By Jan. 1, 2000, all contracting will be done electronically. By Jan. 1, 1999, a new process to move household goods will be developed and reimbursement for self moves will rise from 80 percent to 95 percent of cost.
- By July 1, all DoD regulations and instructions are to be exclusively available on CD-Rom or the Internet.

- Official travel procedures are to be simplified and a new system of temporary duty travel reimbursement is to be in place by April 1998.

- By 1999, all positions in the Defense Department's civilian and military work force are to be evaluated to determine which can be opened to public/private competition.

**DoD tests medical record chip.** Servicemembers may soon carry their medical records in dog-tag-like computer chips if DoD field-testing goes well.

The device is the Personal Information Carrier, or PIC, Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Ronald Blanck said during a Pentagon briefing Nov. 6. The small, rugged carrier stores an individual's medical status and history, including medical documents, X-rays and vaccination records.

Blanck said the Army has tested the device at Fort Detrick, Md., and Fort Gordon, Ga. Tests of the newest version begin next year, he added. He said a critical factor in field testing has been durability.

"You have to have technology that folks can use in the field that can withstand the extremes of cold and heat, go through mud and all kinds of things that soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are faced with, and still be able to be used," Blanck said.

The 1998 operational test will demonstrate whether carriers can totally replace paper medical records, film images and analog audio/video recordings, according to DoD officials. If yes, Blanck said, all personnel — and family members — treated at military medical facilities in the future will have the tags.

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John Grady - Editor  
2425 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201  
Phone: 703-841-4300, Ext. 213  
FAX: 703-841-3505

**Clinton vetoes Congress disapproval of his line-item veto.** President Clinton vetoed a congressional rejection of his decision to use his newly granted line-item veto authority on some military construction projects.

Congress can still override the veto with a two-thirds vote in the House and Senate when it returns next year.

The object of the line-item veto power, approved by Congress, was to make it easier for the president to target for elimination wasteful projects that lawmakers stick in larger spending bills to help their districts.

Clinton put that power to use in October, deleting 38 projects in 24 states worth \$287 million from the fiscal 1998 military construction spending bill.

The Senate voted last month to disapprove of Clinton's veto of 36 of the projects.

The House followed by restoring all 38 projects on a 352-64 vote. The Senate then went along with full restoration.

**Under Secretary Walker confirmed; Assistant Secretary Lister resigns.** Robert M. Walker was confirmed by the Senate as under secretary of the Army. He succeeds Joseph Reeder, who resigned earlier this year.

Walker, who had served as a Senate committee staffer, had served as an assistant secretary of the Army in the first Clinton administration and was also serving as the acting acquisition chief.

Sara Lister, assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs, resigned Nov. 14.

Lister had originally intended to leave office in late November, but left early following publication of her remarks concerning the Marine Corps during a seminar sponsored by Harvard University in Baltimore.

Lister apologized to the commandant of the Marine Corps and the secretary of the Navy for her comments.

She was speaking at the day-long seminar in late October of the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies.

**10 WRAP projects were tested in Division Advanced Warfighting Experiment.** Ten of the 21 systems and technologies that are candidates for the Warfighting Rapid Acquisition Process were tested in the Division Advanced Warfighting Experiment in November at Fort Hood, Texas.

Among the projects being tested in the AWE are: Battlefield Desktop Video Teleconferencing; Movement Tracking System; Near Term Digital Radio and the Tactical Engineering Command and Control System.

**NATO ministers agree on Bosnia presence.** NATO defense ministers agreed recently that the alliance must keep its military presence in Bosnia beyond the peace-keeping mission's scheduled end in June.

Congress has strongly resisted extending the United States presence beyond June 30, but left a loophole in the defense authorization bill that would allow American forces to remain in Bosnia.

U.S. and other allied soldiers will begin a limited withdrawal in early 1998.

**One physical fitness standard for all?** When asked whether the Army should have one physical fitness standard for men and women, regardless of age, Gen. Dennis Reimer said, "absolutely not."

Adding, "what we should have is the same level of effort. If you had one standard you would go to a very mediocre standard."

Togo D. West Jr., Army secretary, agreed. Testifying recently, he said, "I want to hear from the folks in the field what they said they need in physical fitness standards."

**West named to VA Post.** Army Secretary Togo D. West Jr. has been nominated by President Clinton to be the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs.

He has been secretary of the Army since 1993. He replaces Jesse Brown who left the VA in July.

Confirmation hearings will be early next year.

**Physical Training standards will change in October.** Beginning in October, soldiers will see new standards applied to the physical fitness test. The two-mile run remains, as do requirements to do sit-ups and push-ups. These changes are not related to congressional inquiries into possibly establishing a single physical training standard, Army officials said.

In unveiling the program recently, the Army said that it would lower minimum standards for one and raise minimum and maximum standards for some. The point system will remain. The current standards were set in 1984.

In short, male and female soldiers will be required to do the same number of sit-ups; increase the minimum number of push-ups for both, and make almost all but soldiers 26 and under run faster minimum times.

One other significant change affects soldiers 52 and older. Instead of one group for them on the test, there will be three. The age ranges are 52 to 56, 57 to 61 and 62 and over.

Study finds opportunities increase for women in uniform but barriers remain.

The RAND Corp. has reported to the Department of Defense that "gender integration is perceived to have a relatively small effect on readiness, cohesion and morale in the units we studied."

The report, released in late October, said that changes in law and policy since April, 1993 opened more than 250,000 additional positions to women, but the pace of women moving into these positions has been slow.

In part, RAND attributed this to the low number of women in each service, women's level of interest in these positions, coding for experience (such as requiring infantry backgrounds for some drill instructor positions) and reconfiguration problems, such as berthings on ships.

**Report on gender-integrated training is due in December.** The Federal Advisory Panel on Gender-Integrated Training and Related Issues is still looking at whether to recommend that each service continue its own policy of training or adopt a single standard for DoD.

Meeting in late October, the panel did lean to recommend improved working conditions for drill instructors, closer physical fitness standards for men and women and less restrictions on communications between men and women in basic training.

The panel, formed in June in the wake of allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., is due to submit its report to Defense Secretary William Cohen in mid-December.

The panel is chaired by former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum Baker.

**U.N. said it was close to finding nerve gas agent in Iraq.** U.N. weapons inspectors said shortly before they left Iraq in November they were near to finding a stockpile of the liquid nerve agent VX when Iraq began obstructing their visits.

VX, called 10 times more lethal than nerve gas sarin (released in the Tokyo subway system two years ago), can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin. It causes death by paralysis.

The U.N. has warned Iraq of "serious consequences" if it insists on carrying on an order expelling all U.S. citizens from weapons inspection teams.

**U.S. announces land-mine clearing plan.** Defense Secretary William Cohen and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announced plans to raise \$1 billion in public and private funds to clear land mines from areas that endanger civilians.

Both secretaries stressed that the effort, running through 2010, applied only to nations where wars have ended or abated.

Countries most affected by land mines, according to the United States, are Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Cambodia. The United States estimates that 26,000 civilians die from land mines annually.

The United States has said that it sees no immediate way to clear mines on the border between the two Koreas.