



WASHINGTON UPDATE



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Senate confirms Cohen as Secretary of Defense

The Senate confirmed William S. Cohen as the 20th Secretary of Defense by a 99-to-0 vote Jan. 22, only a few hours after his confirmation hearing. Cohen, who recently retired after serving in the Senate for 18 years, said at the hearing before the Armed Services Committee, that he expected to differ sometimes with President Clinton on national security policy but remain a team player.

Nowhere was this difference more clearly stated than his expressed concern as a Republican senator from Maine and as the nominee for the top Defense position over the lack of a clear "exit strategy" from Bosnia.

He pledged several times to his former colleagues on the committee that the 8,500 Americans in the Stabilization Force will be gone from Bosnia in June 1998.

"We are not going to be there after that... This (mission) is going to end at this point," he said. Additionally, Cohen said he would soon meet with NATO allies over the U.S. departure because "it's time for them to assume responsibility and they will have to."

Weapons proliferation poses greatest threat.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological — "pose the greatest threat we'll face in the next few years" internationally and domestically.

Citing the World Trade Center bombing in New York where the explosive device was found to have chemical weapons capability, Defense Secretary William Cohen said more money was needed to assist local officials, the Justice Department and the Federal Emergency Management Agency in this area. The Secretary of the Army coordinates these efforts with civilian officials.

At his confirmation hearing in January, Cohen strongly endorsed passage of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Senate, in the 104th Congress, postponed a vote on the treaty. "Whether we ratify or not we are taking out our chemical weapons stocks by 2004. Whether we ratify it or not, it's going into effect."

New Secretary sets people as top priority.

Defense Secretary William S. Cohen said his first priority as secretary is to continue to attract and retain high-quality men and women in the armed forces.

"The increasing complexity of technology, the quickening pace of warfare and growing unpredictability of the international scene require that our people be more adaptable and agile than ever."

Adding, in response to a question at his confirmation hearing, "I intend to be very aggressive in quality-of-life issues to make sure that we have the very best personnel in the world."

Readiness was his second priority, adding "I share Secretary Perry's view that a key element of readiness is the quality of our personnel and therefore the quality of life we provide them and their families, including their pay, compensation, housing and medical benefits."

Modernization was his third priority. "The massive reduction-in-force structure following the end of the Cold War allowed us either to terminate or defer a multitude of programs within acceptable risks. But this trend must be reversed."

Adding, in response to a question, "we need to reverse trends of pushing procurement to the out years."

Secretary defines time to use military in humanitarian missions. Defense Secretary William Cohen told the Senate Armed Services Committee, "generally, the military is not the most appropriate tool to address humanitarian concerns."

Adding in a written response to the committee's questions, "Under certain conditions, the use of U.S. military forces may be appropriate: when a humanitarian catastrophe dwarfs the ability of civilian relief agencies to respond; when the need for relief is urgent and only the military can provide an immediate response, allowing civilian agencies time to undertake longer-term response to the disaster; when the response requires resources unique to the military; and when the risk to U.S. troops is minimal."

JCS Chief will retire. Gen. John Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will retire in September after serving two, two-year terms as the President's principal military adviser.

The 60-year-old Army general, who was born in Poland, has served 37 years on active duty. His decision to retire is in keeping with the tradition that chairmen step down after two terms.

During his tenure, he has been known as a strong exponent of expanding NATO and was instrumental in developing and fostering the Partnership for Peace program of the Alliance.

Also during his two terms, Shalikashvili guided U.S. forces in operations in Haiti and Bosnia. Throughout this time in office, he advocated clearly defined missions any time American forces were committed to an overseas operation.

"Shali," as he refers to himself, was chairman during a time when overseas operations for the nation's armed forces were increasing as the size of the force and resources for it were declining. Last year during congressional questioning, he said the nation's armed forces needed \$60 billion to modernize their equipment and retain a technological edge on the battlefield.

Before retiring, he will play a major role in the Quadrennial Defense Review.

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Secretary takes work of QDR and defense panel "very seriously." New Defense Secretary William S. Cohen expects the internal DoD Quadrennial Defense Review and the independent National Defense Panel to play an important role during the next year in achieving the proper match of strategy, programs and resources for the future.

"I take the QDR process very seriously and . . . will expect all elements of the Department to take it very seriously. We should be under no illusions. The reductions of recent years have exhausted all the easy options and, if done properly, the QDR will present difficult choices . . . I anticipate coming back to this committee to seek support for the tough but necessary decisions I will make based on the recommendations of the QDR."

Aviation is one area where Cohen expects the QDR to play a key role. Three large programs — the Navy's F/A-18 E and F models, the Air Force's F-22 and the proposed Joint Strike Fighter for the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force — will severely stress all Defense Department procurement accounts.

"We want to continue to dominate the air space," Cohen said, but "we're going to have to make decisions on resources."

The QDR is to make its report in May. The National Defense Panel is to complete its work in December.

Odeen named to head National Defense Panel. Defense Secretary William Cohen tapped Philip Odeen, president of BDM Corp., and a member of the Defense Science Board, to head a special panel looking at reshaping the U.S. military for the 21st century.

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Defense request likely to be slightly larger than last year's. Although the President's budget will not be formally unveiled until Feb. 6, preliminary indications from the Department of Defense is the request will be slightly higher than \$254.4 billion requested for Fiscal Year 1997. Both the President and the Republican-controlled Congress are committed to balancing the budget by Fiscal Year 2002.

In FY 1996, lawmakers appropriated \$7 billion more than requested and \$9 billion more for FY 1997. Whether add-ons will emerge from this Congress is unclear. In addition to the commitment to balance the budget, President Clinton now has line item veto power. He also has said that he intends to restore some money, possibly as much as \$16 billion, to the welfare program.

QDR provides an opportunity for the Army. The newly-started top-to-bottom review of national defense provides the Army an excellent opportunity to tell its story to Congress and the American people, the Army Chief of Staff told a breakfast forum Thursday, Jan. 9.

Speaking to several hundred defense and industry leaders in suburban Washington, Gen. Dennis J. Reimer said the Quadrennial Defense Review "must start with the strategy and get that right at the front end," adding, "strategy determines requirements, which determines force structure."

When asked whether the national security strategy should remain capable of fighting and winning two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts, he said, "Look at the world. Two hot spots, in Northeast Asia, and Southwest Asia, are still present . . . but we don't have to carry the load alone." Reimer cited the successful coalition-building the United States has undertaken in defense of the Republic of Korea and the continuing work at building coalitions to bring stability to the Persian Gulf.

The chief of staff added that U.S. forces are expandable. "Fifty-five percent of the Army is in the Reserve Components," he said. The size of the active duty Army is 495,000. Soon, the size of the Army Reserve and Army National Guard will be 575,000.

Army plays essential role in national security strategy. Citing points made by Samuel R. Berger, the President's national security adviser, Gen. Dennis Reimer said the Army plays an essential role in helping build democracy in Europe through its Partnership for Peace initiatives with former Warsaw Pact nations; builds bridges to Asia and the Pacific through forward presence, training and military-to-military contacts; meets a cluster of new challenges that include drugs, terrorism and threats from rogue nations; provides visible reinforcement — "boots on the ground" — that the United States is the indispensable nation that can contribute to peace; and fosters stability in helping the nation build a new economic architecture to function in a global economy.

Perry bids farewell. William J. Perry was presented the Medal of Freedom for his service as Secretary of Defense Jan. 14 at a ceremony on Fort Myer, Va. In his remarks, Perry said he always tried to follow the advice of "a tough Sergeant Major: Take care of the troops, he said, and they will take care of you. I have followed that advice and that for me has made all the difference. It made all the difference every time I advised President Clinton on when and how to use military force."

AUSA establishes new VP office; Stroup heads ILW. The Association of the United States Army has announced the establishment of the office of Vice President, Special Projects, and the election of a new Vice President, Education, effective Jan. 1.

Gen. Jack N. Merritt, USA, Ret., and President of AUSA, said Lt. Gen. Richard L. West, USA, Ret., who had been serving as the Vice President of Education and Managing Director of the Institute of Land Warfare at AUSA, in his new office will now coordinate the Association's actions with respect to the Quadrennial Defense Review and the National Defense Panel, as directed by the 104th Congress.

Lt. Gen. Theodore G. Stroup Jr., USA, Ret., whose last assignment on active duty was as the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, is succeeding West in the education post and as Managing Director of the Institute.

Financial problems surface in mobilization insurance program. Financial problems surrounding the four-month-old reserve mobilization insurance program have surfaced requiring Congressional action to fix.

The program is now \$72 million in debt. The law creating it allows a request for a supplemental appropriation.

What has happened so far is that activated reservists enrolled in the program received only 4 percent of their benefits of up to \$5,000 per month.

DoD insists that eventually, activated reservists in the plan would receive their full benefit.

The plan, which was designed to be self-supporting, would provide between \$500 and \$5,000 worth of coverage for premiums of \$12.20 per \$1,000. The benefits are paid to reservists called to active duty for more than 30 days and are made after he or she has been mobilized for 30 days.

President asks panel to continue monitoring Gulf War ailments. A 12-member panel of medical experts appointed by the White House to investigate illnesses suffered by Gulf War veterans has been asked to stay in place for nine more months and monitor continuing studies into the ailments.

The panel, which sent its report to President Clinton in early January, recommended that any new investigations into chemical weapons exposure be conducted outside the Department of Defense.

The committee did not find evidence to prove a link between the illnesses and servicemembers' exposure to environmental hazards during service in the Gulf War. It did say stress may have been a contributing factor in the illnesses veterans are reporting.

Joulwan will retire in spring. Gen. George Joulwan, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, will retire this spring, ending a 36-year career in the Army.

Defense Secretary William Perry cited Joulwan's special contributions to the success of the Implementation Force in stopping the killing in Bosnia.

Seven African-American WWII veterans receive Medals of Honor. Former 1st Lt. Vernon J. Baker, of St. Maries, Idaho, was presented the Medal of Honor at a White House ceremony in January for gallantry in action during World War II.

Six other African-Americans received the Medal of Honor posthumously: Maj. Charles L. Thomas of Detroit; 1st Lt. John R. Fox of Cincinnati; Staff Sgt. Ruben Rivers of Oklahoma City; Staff Sgt. Edward A. Carter of Los Angeles; PFC Willy F. James Jr. of Kansas City, Mo.; and Pvt. George Watson of Birmingham, Ala.

All but Rivers, who had previously been awarded the Silver Star, were recipients of Distinguished Service Crosses, the nation's second-highest award for valor.

Congress authorized a statute of limitations waiver for consideration for the Medal of Honor because due recognition was accorded these soldiers earlier. In 1993, the Army contacted Shaw University to determine if there was racial disparity in the way Medal of Honor recipients were selected during World War II. The North Carolina institution noted that not one of the 432 medals went to any of the more than one million African-American soldiers who served during the war.

The study panel at Shaw recommended 10 men's valor be reviewed by a board of generals. The seven selected came from that list.

Winter wargame will help Army After Next become more specific. A wargame emphasizing future strategy conducted at the Army War College beginning in late January will help the Army After Next project begin determining what types of weapons the service will need for combat after 2010.

Maj. Gen. Robert Scales, Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine at the Training and Doctrine Command and head of the project, told reporters in early January, "We've got time, we're not fighting a war," in developing the connecting links to the Army XXI.

Scales expected some ideas on future weapons and emerging technologies will be discussed in a report to be sent to Gen. Dennis Reimer, Chief of Staff, in June.