

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD  
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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for your steadfast support for our service members who are missing from our nation's past conflicts and their families who wait for news of their loved ones. The authorities and appropriations the Congress has provided to the Department of Defense have allowed us to continue to recover the remains of our fallen heroes and to provide answers to their families.

From Dr. Jim Miller's departure in early January to late June, when Ms. Christine Wormuth was confirmed as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, in addition to serving as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, I also performed the duties of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. In this capacity, Secretary Hagel tasked me with leading the Department's restructuring of its personnel accounting for past conflicts to account for our missing personnel more effectively and to ensure that their families receive timely and accurate information. The Department is committed to improving the services we provide families.

The Department of Defense conducts accounting of personnel missing from past conflicts to record and honor the deeds and sacrifices of our service members, civilian personnel, and the legacy of loss endured by their families. Locating and identifying the missing person is the mission. Their families are our focus, and better service to those families is our goal. The Department recognizes that we cannot recover remains in all cases, but we have a duty to provide designated family members the fullest possible accounting of their loved ones.

Change, even for the better, can be difficult. I appreciate this Committee's support for reform and I look forward to continuing to work with you. The Secretary's decisions to change how the Department conducts personnel accounting address deficiencies in process, workplace culture, and organizational structure. The decisions are based on dispassionate analytical assessments and informed by feedback from families and Congress.

### **Government Accountability Office Study**

As the committee is aware, the Secretary decided to restructure how the Department conducts personnel accounting after careful consideration of reviews by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and by the Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), and of independent assessments and comments from the DoD Inspector General, veterans' service organizations, families of the missing, and the workforce. This Committee, in fact, directed the GAO review in the summer of 2012 to examine the processes and structure of the personnel accounting community.

The GAO found that the Department had not completed a plan to meet the requirements and goals set by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, and that the personnel accounting community's fragmented organizational structure undermined the Department's capability and capacity to accomplish its mission. The GAO made the following nine recommendations to improve the Department's personnel accounting effort:

- Examine options for reorganization.

- Clarify roles and responsibilities in four key functional areas:
  - o equipment and artifact identification and analysis;
  - o research and analysis;
  - o investigations; and
  - o family outreach and external communications.
  
- Develop a new memorandum of agreement between the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL) and the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Accounting Command (JPAC).
  
- Finalize the Department's community-wide plan to develop the increased capability and capacity required by applicable statute.
  
- Establish criteria that can be used to prioritize recovery efforts.
  
- Establish a mechanism for community-wide communication.
  
- Formalize JPAC and Service Casualty Officer communication procedures.
  
- Develop personnel files for all unaccounted persons as required by statute.

- Develop memorandums of agreement between the Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, and the Commander, JPAC, and other geographic Combatant Commands.

The Department accepted all nine recommendations made by the GAO and has implemented three of them: examine options for re-organization, develop a memorandum of agreement between LSEL and JPAC, and formalize JPAC and Service casualty office communications procedures. The remaining recommendations are in various stages of completion and will be incorporated into the plan to restructure the personnel accounting community.

#### **Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation Office (CAPE) Study**

Also, last summer, at the request of the then-Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Dr. Jim Miller, the Deputy Secretary of Defense tasked the Director of the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation Office (CAPE) to:

- Assess the current structure of the personnel accounting community and determine if it is effective and cost efficient.
- Determine how the various components of the personnel accounting community support the identification process.
- Evaluate whether or not the accounted-for goal contained in the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act is the optimal metric.

- Provide recommendations for alternative organizational structures and processes to conduct this mission effectively.

CAPE completed its review in March, and I defer to my colleague Dr. Morin to address CAPE's findings in detail.

### **Secretary Hagel's Decision**

In light of these reviews and comments from others, on February 20, 2014, Secretary Hagel determined that the Department must change the way it accounts for its personnel who are missing from past conflicts. The Secretary directed me, as Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, to develop a plan for how to organize the Department most effectively to increase to the maximum extent possible the numbers of missing Service personnel accounted for annually while ensuring timely and accurate information is provided to their families. On March 25, I presented my plan to the Secretary, and he approved recommendations to restructure the community, streamline and redesign business practices, and expand services to families. Specifically, he directed that the following actions be accomplished:

- Create a new Defense Agency. The new agency will combine the resources of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), JPAC, and select functions of LSEL, under one new Defense Agency led by a non-career member of the Senior Executive Service with a General/Flag Officer as Deputy. Establishing this new Defense Agency will improve the Department's performance in past conflict accounting by streamlining organizations and processes and refocusing our

organizational culture. The new Defense Agency will be responsible for all aspects of past conflict personnel accounting, including resource management across the Department and policy for personnel recovery.

- Centralize oversight under a single Principal Staff Assistant. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD (P)) will have policy oversight responsibilities for personnel accounting matters and will exercise authority, direction, and control over the new Defense Agency. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD (P&R)) will retain oversight for the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System, and will be the principal advisor to the USD (P) on the forensic medical discipline, including laboratory and identification policy and operations.
- Assign a Medical Examiner to the new Defense Agency. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, through the USD (P&R), will assign a medical examiner from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) whose primary duties will be in support of the identification of remains from past conflicts and military operations at the new Defense Agency. AFMES will exercise Department of Defense scientific authority for past conflict identifications. The assigned Medical Examiner will oversee the scientific operations of the new Defense Agency, which will include what is today JPAC and the LSEL located in Dayton, Ohio. The AFMES and the assigned past conflicts accounting Medical Examiner will remain within Department of Defense medical channels under the direction, authority, and control of the USD (P&R) through the ASD (HA).

- Establish new metrics for past conflict accounting. The Department will work closely with Congress, families, and veterans' service organizations, to establish metrics for assessing past conflict accounting that identify the families as the customers and must demonstrate commitment to the process of recovery and family satisfaction.
- Work with Congress to realign funds to a single budget line. The Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) (USD (C)) and the USD (P) will develop a plan to realign funds from DPMO, JPAC, and LSEL to the new Defense Agency in this fiscal year. There are more parts of the Department involved in POW/MIA activities than these three entities; however, it may not be cost effective or efficient to combine the funding for these other entities into the new agency. The USD (C) and USD (P) will develop options for how the new Defense Agency will exercise oversight of components outside of the new Defense Agency.
- Implement a single centralized database and case management system. The new Defense Agency will be responsible for establishing and maintaining a centralized database and case management system containing all missing service members' information, including pertinent information regarding their cases. The database and case management system will be accessible to all elements of the Department involved in the search, recovery, identification, and communications phases of the program to account for missing personnel.



- Improve external communications and family outreach. The new Defense Agency will be responsible for managing, organizing, and working with the Service Casualty Offices (SCOs) on communication with the family members of missing personnel from past conflicts. The casualty affairs responsibilities will remain with the Secretaries of the Military Departments. The Director of the new Defense Agency, in coordination with the SCOs, will develop guidance that details roles and responsibilities to ensure responsive, timely, and transparent communications with the families. Additionally, the new Defense Agency will establish communications with veterans' service organizations (VSOs), concerned citizens, and the public on the Department's efforts to account for missing personnel. All external communications with families, VSOs, concerned citizens, and the public will be robust and two-way. All external communications and events dealing with unaccounted-for personnel in which the Department is participating will be coordinated through the new Defense Agency.
- Expand public-private partnerships. Finding our missing personnel is a national priority in which many private organizations and individuals are actively engaged. Many of the Department's successes in this area are due to assistance from private citizens and groups. The Department of Defense will take steps to enhance collaboration with private entities in the United States and overseas. The new Defense Agency will be responsible for building and managing these vital relationships with private entities.

The consolidation of the organizations that work on past conflict personnel accounting is a necessary start but we must also change the culture of personnel accounting and processes in place. The Secretary's decision to increase private-public partnerships, make a medical examiner the identification authority and director of laboratory functions, and focus on families as the customer for services are emblematic of the cultural and process changes that must happen for us to be successful in fully accounting for personnel missing from past conflicts.

Some of these decisions, particularly on the role of the medical examiner, are significant departures from how the Department has operated in the past, and will require continued support for change from within the Department and from Congress. The Secretary's decisions are deliberate and backed by years of solid analysis from within the government and by independent bodies. To build on our strengths and to change the cultures, structures, and processes, we must approach this process rationally, not based on emotion or personal agendas and bias. The Department will ensure that we sustain and further develop the strengths of our past conflict personnel accounting processes, notably scientific independence and validity, while increasing the assets available to the mission from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System.

Immediately following the Secretary's announcement, the Administration developed a legislative proposal that sought specific authorities to help the Department implement the Secretary's direction. I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ms. Davis and all the members of this Committee who worked with the Department to ensure this out-of-cycle legislative proposal was included in the proposed Fiscal Year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act. Without your help, we cannot change the way the Department accounts for its missing service members.

In coordination with the USD (C) and the Director of CAPE, the Department is seeking reprogramming of funds for the three current organizations in FY 2014. The Department will also begin the process of codifying the new Defense Agency in a Department of Defense Directive, and will amend other Instructions and Directives, as required.

Our goal is for the new Defense Agency to achieve Initial Operational Capability by January 1, 2015, and Full Operational Capability by January 1, 2016. Throughout this process, operations to account for the missing and to keep their families informed will continue.

### **Conclusion**

The Secretary of Defense has a longstanding personal interest in this important mission, and feels compelled to improve the Department's operations in support of this critical undertaking. I have welcomed the time I've spent working this noble mission. I have particularly appreciated working with this Committee and others in Congress to help the Department achieve its goal of transforming its past conflict personnel accounting to more effectively account for our missing personnel and to ensure that their families receive timely and accurate information.

Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to your questions.