



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
DEPUTY CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER
DIRECTOR, COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION
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ASSISTANTS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
DIRECTOR, NET ASSESSMENT
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES
DIRECTORS OF THE DOD FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: Secretary of Defense Guidance on Responding to Members of Congress

The Secretary of Defense expects the Department to respond to Congress in a direct and timely manner. Answers to all congressional inquiries and requests will be as responsive and expeditious as possible. Prompt, courteous, and clear communication between our Department and the Legislative Branch is in the best interests of our Nation.

Congressional correspondence addressed to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Defense will be assigned to the Component responsible for the subject matter. Components will be tasked to either prepare a response for the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Defense, or reply on their behalf. In either case, this should be accomplished within 14 calendar days of receipt. Components will answer the specific questions in the correspondence using the attached guidance. If preparation of a complete answer requires more time, an interim response or reply will be sent indicating when to expect a final one. A final response or reply will be sent no later than 30 days.

This guidance also applies to congressional inquiries addressed to Component Heads and all subordinate organizations. The Secretary of Defense expects us to improve our communication with Congress at every level. He thanks you for your support.

Michael L. Bruhn
Executive Secretary

Attachment:
As stated

cc: Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense



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**Guidance on Preparing Congressional Correspondence
for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense**

- All responses for the Secretary's or Deputy Secretary's signature and replies on their behalf should be submitted within 14 calendar days of receipt.
- In exceptional cases when a complete answer cannot be provided within 14 calendar days, interim responses or replies will be sent and will include any information available and indicate when to expect a final one.
- A final response or reply will be sent no later than 30 days after date of receipt.
- Answer the question asked. Address the issue raised. Do not avoid the question or answer a different question. If you can't answer the question or address the issue, state why.
- Give Members of Congress the Bottom Line Up Front; be direct and to the point using clear, concise, and straightforward language.
- Eliminate any extraneous language; do not use unnecessary words.
- If a letter refers to a provision of law or Congressional report language, ensure our actions and our response or reply are actually complying with Congressional intent and not working around it.
- Make maximum information available. If you cannot provide information, say why. If information will be delayed, say when it will be available.
- Be prepared to respond promptly to any questions or edits the Secretary may have on Congressional package your component submits to him. Please work with the Executive Secretariat (ExecSec) to ensure relevant subject matter experts are identified and available for quick-turn questions and edits.
- Apply the same high standards regarding timeliness, responsiveness, directness, and accuracy for other incoming requests from the Hill – phone calls, meetings, questions/inserts for the record, etc.

Additional guidance is available in the DoD Manual for Written Material (DoDM 5110.04-M-V1 and V2,) and DoD Instruction "Provision of Information to Congress" (DoDI 5400.04). The suspense timelines for Congressional taskings referenced in enclosure 3, V1 of the Manual for Written Material, is superseded by the guidance in this attachment.

Contact the Executive Secretariat at (703) 692-7126 with any additional questions.