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*U.S. House of Representatives*

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February 13, 2008

ERIN C. CONATON, STAFF DIRECTOR

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Gates:

I am writing to urge you to exercise strong leadership on a critical issue confronting the military, a review of the roles and missions of the Department of Defense. As you know, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, section 941, requires the performance of a Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review, with the first review to be performed this year and submitted to Congress along with the budget in 2009. This review will provide an unparalleled opportunity for you and your partner, Admiral Mullen, to extend the operational jointness achieved under the Goldwater-Nichols Act into the institutional areas within the military services where it has not yet been able to fully penetrate. In so doing, you can make a truly lasting improvement to our national defense.

Congress chose to act on this issue because the current moment in time is in many ways very similar to the historic moment after World War II when the current framework for the roles and missions of the Department were set out in the National Security Act of 1947. That Act combined the Department of War (renamed the Department of the Army), the Department of the Navy, and the newly created Department of the Air Force under what came to be the Department of Defense. It was followed by the landmark Key West Agreement of 1948, under which the heads of the Army, Navy, and Air Force agreed on a division of labor describing the roles and missions of each. This reform came in response to significant organizational conflict between the Army and Navy which had hampered the war effort during World War II. Even so, organizational conflicts in recent years have kept us from extending the benefits of jointness, which have become obvious in so many of our operational efforts, to newer areas of warfare and to the acquisition and budget processes.

The world we live in is changing every day, and the security environment is shifting with similar rapidity. We are engaged by enemies determined to attack us in domains and on battlefields where they perceive that we are vulnerable. In some evolving areas of warfare, we are in fact vulnerable, because although we have significant technological capabilities, we are

The Honorable Robert M. Gates

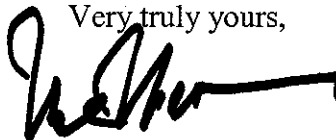
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limited by a lack of sufficient organizational capability and have very little sound doctrine. A careful review of roles and missions can identify the components of the Department best positioned to provide or develop capability, organization, and doctrine in these new areas of warfare. I urge you to ensure that the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review clarifies roles and missions particularly in those areas that are relatively new and not well understood such as cyber warfare, unmanned aerial vehicles, and information operations. At the same time, the review should address some traditional areas of military activity, such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, missile defense, and airlift, which have changed to such a degree in recent years that the responsibilities of the various components of the Department have become confused.

I recognize that this review is a tall order, and that by necessity your effort will need to be focused on those issues most in need of clarification. Nonetheless, this review provides an excellent opportunity for your leadership to move the Department of Defense towards greater jointness and unity of effort. I hope that you will undertake the review in that spirit.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ike Skelton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

IKE SKELTON  
Chairman

cc: Admiral Michael G. Mullen

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