

Department of Defense



**Summary Notes:
Developing 21st Century DoD SES Leaders
Conference**

**Fort McNair, Washington, DC
May 9, 2006**

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Developing 21st Century Department of Defense Senior Executive Service Leaders Executive Summary

Purpose

At the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) representatives from the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy [ODUSD (CPP)] planned and conducted a one-day conference for Senior Executive Service (SES) employees of the Department of Defense (DoD). The purpose of the conference was to obtain opinions, perspectives, and suggestions about how to strengthen and align the SES with 21st century requirements. The conference was held May 9, 2006 at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

The conference was part of the ongoing efforts of a DoD SES working group chartered by the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy), and the Director of Manpower and Personnel, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to develop DoD policy and implementation guidance to strengthen and align the SES in view of the challenges and demands expressed in the 2006 Defense Quadrennial Review and other pertinent studies on executive management in the 21st century.

Focus Group Methodology and Logistics

The conference participants were obtained by a request for SES participants issued to all the DoD Components. The focus group results will be used to inform the continuing work of the Department to shape the senior executive corps. On the day of the conference, participants were welcomed by the Honorable Michael Dominguez, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, on behalf of Dr. David S.C. Chu, Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness). The Honorable Gordon England, Deputy Secretary of Defense, delivered the keynote address, and Colonel Lernes Hebert, Deputy Director, General/Flag Officer Management, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Military Personnel Policy, discussed the new Joint Officer Management Strategy. Ms. Marilee Fitzgerald, Principal Director, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy) reviewed the administrative and logistical arrangements.

After the morning's presentations, SES participants attended their assigned morning focus group.¹ The morning focus groups were composed of mixed-component participants. Facilitators lead each of the 14 morning focus groups through the series of prepared questions and participants' responses were recorded. Facilitators were provided both by Center of Excellence (COE) and by various DoD components. (Facilitators were trained by COE the day before the conference to ensure consistency in approach and recording of notes.)

For the afternoon focus groups (thirteen in all), participants were grouped by like component. Facilitators lead the participants through the same questions that had been covered in the morning, this time obtaining a component-specific perspective. During the lunch break, all facilitators met and developed a list of common themes that emerged from the morning sessions. These common themes were prepared as a PowerPoint presentation and provided to the conference participants as a whole at the end of the day, with an opportunity for them to comment on and discuss items reported as common themes.

Each facilitator was responsible for summarizing his/her notes from each session conducted and providing the summarized notes according to the format provided in the facilitator's training session. COE analyzed all facilitator notes and prepared summaries of the major themes of the morning focus groups, and summaries for the afternoon focus groups by components. Those summaries are attached.

Results in Brief

- Conference participation was for SES members only. A total of 170 SES participated, as follows:

Army 26; Navy – 55; Air Force – 41; Fourth Estate – 38; Combatant Commands - 9

¹ All focus group participants were advised that their names would not be cited in the focus group report. They were told that COE would be reporting focus group findings in the aggregate with emphasis on common themes and trends.

- Geographic distribution of conference participants:

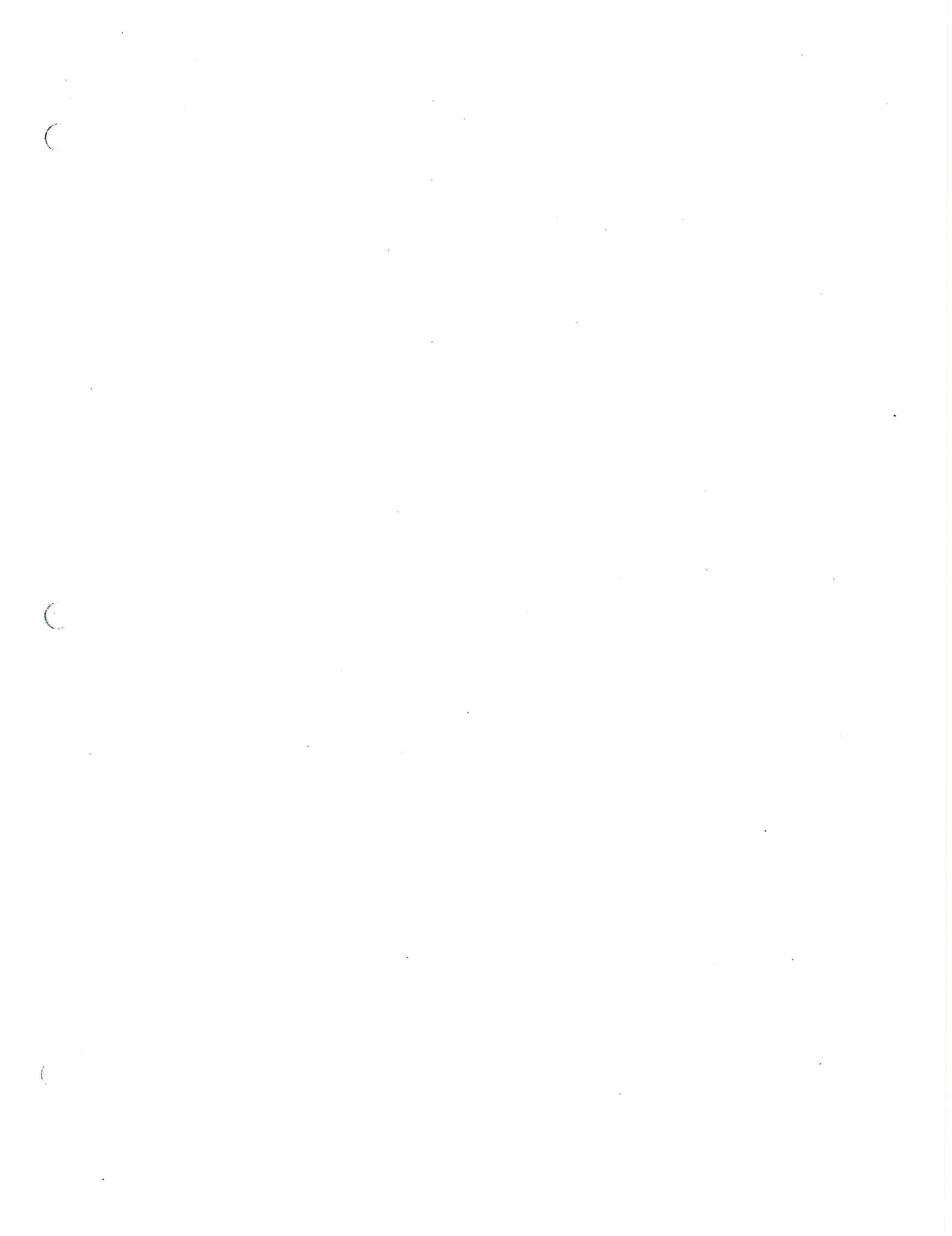
Region	Total
Local (DC, VA, MD)	126
Northeast (MA, RI, NJ, NE)	7
Southeast (FL, AL, WV, GA)	9
Midwest (IL, KS, OH, MI, IN, ID)	20
Southwest (TX, NM)	3
West (CO, CA, UT)	5
Grand Total	170

- The morning session consisted of 14 "joint" focus groups. The afternoon session consisted of 13 Component-specific focus groups, including a separate focus group for the Combatant Commands.
- Consistency of themes was considerable between both morning and afternoon sessions. Most consistent themes:
 - **Develop Business Case:** SES members felt strongly that the Department has not made a strong business case for making changes in the shaping and aligning the DoD SES with 21st century mission requirements. While there seemed to be general understanding of DoD's new challenges and the need for a unity of effort to achieve success, many could not translate that need into a refresh of the DoD SES program through a more deliberate leadership, development, and management framework.
 - **Define SES Role:** Feedback from SES members accentuated the need to retain the valuable contributions they believe they make to DoD (e.g., long-term vision, civilian perspective). Generally, SES members emphasized the need for continuity of purpose and that part of their role is to help maintain this type of continuity. Additionally, they stressed the need to increase their leadership role along with General/Flag Officers and political appointees. Most SES members envision an equal relationship and respect between the two groups. Some see the military working with "customers" while the SES provides continuity and service delivery.
 - **Design Developmental Opportunities:** SES members expressed the desire for a formal SES development and selection program which includes career development opportunities and rotations that are properly planned, timed, and induced. The focus groups revealed that there is a perception

among SES members of a "brass ceiling." That is, many civilians, compared to their military counterparts, miss the opportunity to lead because they have not been systematically developed. The need to correct this "imbalance" was stressed. Also, many believe they are not as competitive as former military for SES positions.

- Additional themes from the Component-specific focus groups include:
 - Developing a mentoring system for SES members
 - Committing resources and manpower to the SES corps
 - Rejecting "one-size fits all" approach to strengthening the SES corps
 - Setting clear expectations, tied to the DoD Strategic plan, for SES members
 - Developing pipeline beginning at the GS-12 level for future SES positions
 - Establishing "timeline" that outlines potential career paths for SES

- One notable difference from the Component-specific focus groups came from the Combatant Commands. We found that the Combatant Commands are much clearer on what is meant by "jointness," and they speak more favorably about SES having joint experience (through rotations and education) than the other Components.



Summary of Morning Sessions

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Leadership Theme - What does it mean to be a DoD Executive?

1. What is the value added leadership of a career SES?

- Balance the tension between change and continuity. Long-term focus on “greater good” for the organization and DoD
- Add value through their technical expertise and institutional knowledge.
- Provide subject matter and technical expertise Military may not have
- Help GO’s make change happen, serve as “Knowledgeable Agents of Change.”
- Develop and sustain long-term vision for the organization
- Provide perspective and advice on “the government way” very important to Political Appointees (PA)
- Provide perspective on civilian workforce
- Serve in “Acting” military and political leadership positions when they are vacant.

2. What should be the relationship of career SES with General/Flag Officers and political appointees?

- DoD needs to establish and foster a strong relationship between SES and GO
- SES can serve as bridge between GO and PA – Triangle concept – each of the three has a unique and valuable role, should be an equally valued and equally strong member of leadership
- SES should be treated equally to GO and have equal responsibility as GO
- SES and GO should have shared leadership, continuity, and accountability
- Often GO rely on SES because SES have the depth
- SES perceive that they are often not viewed with equal respect in comparison to the GO. This is often result of the structure, as they report to or are deputies to GO. (Show of hands at conference indicated about 3/4 felt less respected by GO, about 1/2 felt less respect from Political Appointees, and about 1/3 felt less respect from rank and file.)
- Need more leadership responsibilities to be invested in the SES roles, to increase responsibility and stature.

3. How can we provide leadership continuity with increased position/assignment mobility?

- Various views of rotations and mobility. See value of rotations, but not to the extent of military model.

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- There are benefits to staying longer than 2 – 3 years in an assignment. Allows achievement of longer-term missions. Don't want to lose this.
- Sometimes SES stay too long, sometimes not long enough.

4. Are there some SES positions that should be managed at the DoD level? (e.g., DoD involvement in the hiring, assignment, and development of incumbents). If answer is yes – What are examples of these positions, and why do you believe they should be managed at the DoD level?

- Many do not see benefit or compelling business purpose for DoD-level management of SES positions. OSD should have their positions, components theirs.
- Some see the need for selected positions to be managed at the DoD level – a “qualified yes”. Especially positions that require working with external agencies (or interagency), or that require working with international entities.

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Development Theme – What does it mean to deliberately develop and manage SES careers?

5. How do we deliberately develop an SES member? Whose role is it? How is it best done?

- Strongest theme – the desire for a standard program for the development and selection of SES corps.
 - Many expressed desire for a clear structure for an SES development program, identifying candidates at the GS 13 – 14 level, and defining clear development paths up through SES ranks.
 - Development path should include ability to remove those who are not developing according to needs and expectations.
- Whatever development system is to be developed, it must be supported with resources:
 - Money
 - Opportunity
 - Backfills
 - Re-integrating plans (post rotation or development activity)
 - Support for relocation
 - Expansion of development opportunities, such as mentoring, and rotations outside of DOD, to academia, private sector, and other federal agencies.
- OSD should set SES development standards and guidelines, components should manage the process
- Consider benchmarking how other federal agencies develop their SES; don't just focus on military model. Civilian needs are different from military needs. (Air Force, other DoD components, Department of Interior, Peace Corps, and Environmental Protection Agency were all mentioned as possible SES development programs to benchmark.)

6. We believe that enterprise-wide perspective and joint perspective are essential competencies. How should we define "enterprise-wide" perspective?" "Joint perspective?"

- "Enterprise-wide" and "Joint perspective" – the theme is that there is a lack of common understanding and definition of these terms. They are interpreted in many different ways.
- There is a need for a centrally disseminated, consistent definition. Don't leave it to each component (or group within a component) to define for themselves.
- General agreement that most SES positions need a joint perspective, but that not all SES positions need to be "joint."

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7. How should one acquire these competencies? What are potential barriers in acquiring them?

- First need to define the competencies and the development needs specific to SES corps
- Need a roadmap and need funding
- Need training, mentoring and other developmental opportunities across components and across agencies (such as opportunity to serve on an interagency workgroup)
- SES and GO's should have combined orientation. (There is a two week course available now on "jointness"; however military always gets the slots.)

8. What are your views about encouraging position mobility? Geographic mobility? What are potential barriers and how can we remove them?

- Barriers to position mobility include:
 - lack of a clear plan as to how it fits into a development path
 - lack of financial support or incentives for relocating
 - lack of family support for relocating (especially compared to family support received by military when they relocate)
- Not every SES can do any job, some positions require depth of technical or professional expertise
- Movement should be part of a development plan – movement for its own sake not helpful
- Encourage mobility of GS 13 and 14 also, to develop the pool of potential SES applicants.
- Encourage mobility outside of the National Capital Region (NCR).

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Selection – How do we get the right talent for the right position?

9. How do we balance the Department's need to infuse talent from outside the Department with the need to provide development opportunities for career DoD SES members?

- We do need both internal and external candidates
- SES selection should incorporate a process for building internal bench or pool of likely SES candidates. This pool should be selected based not just on ECQ's but also on potential.
- Some thought that joint experience doesn't necessarily make for a better SES candidate.
- Need more competitive incentives and benefits to attract from private sector

10. How would the potential requirement for "joint perspective" affect this balance? What needs to be done to achieve the right balance?

- Outside experts serving in HQE roles and political appointees can fill the need for outside perspective.
- Possible barrier - Many vacancy announcements are currently oriented toward internal functional expertise, not "jointness"

11. What is your perception of the competitiveness of current DoD civilians for vacant SES positions?

- The "Brass Ceiling" – many expressed that civilians are not as competitive for SES positions because of the lack of systematic development, as exists for the military.
- Perception that SES vacancies are often "fixed" – slotted to go to someone already known by selecting officials. Reduces incentive to apply.
- Civilians are often more competitive in the area of technical depth (which is crucial in some SES positions), but not as competitive with leadership experience

12. Should we have a "corporate" focus when selecting SES, i.e., hire those who demonstrate potential for assignment to any DoD enterprise-wide position? Or, should we have an "organizational" focus, i.e., hire those

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who demonstrate potential to succeed in the organization with the vacancy? (Corporate Executive versus Business Unit Executive).

- A “qualified yes” -- a corporate focus for selected, identified positions.
- Some key SES positions should be thought of at the DOD level, but otherwise, no. OSD has their SES, Components have theirs.
- Consider using ECQ's plus “Defense Criteria” when selecting for SES
- Need independent, unbiased review of applicants. OPM’s role not clear (and often not desired)
- In general, perceived lack of incentives to take on SES positions.
- Need a data base of SES candidates to improve selection

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- **General – How do we strengthen the SES Corps?**

13. As we think about the objective to strengthen the SES corps, what else should we consider?

Two main themes emerged, which can appear to be contradictory, but do present opportunities for the introduction of change through proper communications, buy-in, planning, and resourcing.

- **Main theme: What is the business case for making changes to SES system?**
 - SES's want to understand what is wrong with the system – what are we trying to fix?
 - What expectations are SES not meeting? What does leadership want from us?
 - For any changes to be successful, must get buy-in from Service Secretaries and Chiefs of Staff
- **Main theme: Institutionalize SES development and selection, reaching into the GS levels to develop a pool.**
 - Have clear expectations; have resources to implement and follow through on plans.
 - Publicize and promote new approach to SES development and selection.
 - Offer development and incentives to encourage civilians to become SES
 - Make investments in SES development and then measure the return on investment.
 - Compensation and benefits need to be more competitive. There are “pay compression” issues, which is a disincentive for applicants into SES positions.

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Leadership Theme - What does it mean to be a DoD Executive?

1. What is the value added leadership of a career SES?

- Act as steward of Civil Service Leadership
- One who supports the mission and goals of the organization
- Implement and carryout a strategic vision
- Principal implementers of goals of department/President/Congress
- Continuity of vision, ability to motivate workforce, corporate memory, fill gaps in leadership coverage, stewardship
- Leadership, expertise, and knowledge that spans domains for a longer and deeper view
- They are decision makers to continuity, providing a unique value of continuity and corporate memory
- Provide a balance between military and political structures
- Depth and Breadth of Functional Area
- Leadership of technical competence and the leadership that comes from longevity/continuity in one position; overview and knowledge of what is needed
- Substantive knowledge to facilitate change
- Civilian perspective, expertise in civilian management
- Provide a “long term view” and have the ability to continue to work initiatives that may take longer than General Flag officers are assigned

2. What should be the relationship of career SES with General/Flag Officers and political appointees?

- Collaborative, complimentary, partners
- The relationship should be geared for both to act as steward for the organization’s long-term vision
- The relationship should be geared to promote interaction and support for the organizations mission
- Most see that there should be an equal relationship and respect between the two groups for the unique roles they play: military works with “ customers” and contractors; SES provides continuity and delivers services
- Manages tension between continuity and change
- G/Fos normally in charge, SES deputy so SES must carry through on changes when G/Fos rotates. Don’t move SES so much that there will be no continuity of leadership

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- Some felt continuity could be maintained by staggering rotations such that both types of leaders don't leave at same time

3. How can we provide leadership continuity with increased position/assignment mobility?

- Devise/implement a career mobility plan
- Organization (component, DoD) should look at who should be an SES, ST, SL, then identify positions, and decide on mobility and growth based on end-results and/or articulated paths
- General consensus that there needs to be continuity of purpose in an organization and that SES can help achieve this type of continuity
- Add value to assignment mobility
- Create a partnership between military and civilian leaders, internal to the organization and external to the component

4. Are there some SES positions that should be managed at the DoD level? (e.g., DoD involvement in the hiring, assignment, and development of incumbents). If answer is yes – What are examples of these positions, and why do you believe they should be managed at the DoD level?

- Only OSD positions should be managed at DoD level
- Strong belief that components should be responsible for managing their own SES positions
- No, SES positions should be managed by service to which the executive is employed
- Almost all recommended that DoD is too large to manage SES positions

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Development Theme – What does it mean to deliberately develop and manage SES careers?

5. How do we deliberately develop an SES member? Whose role is it? How is it best done?

- Most felt development should start before reaching SES positions
- Place better emphasis on developing feeder groups (GS13/14/15) for SES corps
- Many felt development should be less ad hoc
- More feedback and forced mentoring
- Develop a better career path
- Most recommend that SES provide a professional education process that is strategic like the military's
- Senior SES should mentor junior SES employees
- Participate in the selection board
- Be involved in the PMF process
- Suggest educational topics based on areas identified for strengthening
- Establish opportunities for such courses to be taken without penalty
- Provide funding for learning/training (current training budget is limited)
- Use a proactive structured military model to develop SES talent as opposed to the reactive unstructured civilian model
- Most recommended that DoD provide Succession Planning process for SES like the military

6. We believe that enterprise-wide perspective and joint perspective are essential competencies. How should we define "enterprise-wide perspective?" "Joint perspective?"

- Most stated that the terms "enterprise" and "joint" have not been defined. Without an articulated definition of these terms, how and what is the optimal way to organize?
- Most understood enterprise to mean across components and to joint to mean across DoD
- Enterprise wide is defined as a perspective offered within one particular service. Joint is defined as a perspective offered across the services

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7. How should one acquire these competencies? What are potential barriers in acquiring them?

- All agreed that competencies would be acquired through professional development, training opportunities; the USAF has a model for this
- Need to link GO and SES training, example “CAPSTONE”
- Barriers:
 - Feasibility and return on investment
 - Financial (cost of living). What is the incentive for relocating from a lower cost area to a higher cost area?
 - Lack of funding

8. What are your views about encouraging position mobility? Geographic mobility? What are potential barriers and how can we remove them?

- All agreed that incentives are key to encouraging position mobility
- Rationale for moving should be clear
- Many saw the need for incentives for mobility for SES and their families, noting that many GS 15s do not want to be SES due to small pay differentials between GS 15 (step 10) and SES.
- There was agreement that voluntary movement is good

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Selection – How do we get the right talent for the right position?

9. How do we balance the Department's need to infuse talent from outside the Department with the need to provide development opportunities for career DoD SES members?

- Most agree that DoD must hire experts from the outside
- Many said this balance should not be determined politically by a current administration, but with the long view
- Establish a “time line” or career plan that outlines potential career paths for SES.
Include:
 - Training requirements
 - Required skills
 - Demonstrated performance
 - Incentives

10. How would the potential requirement for "joint perspective" affect this balance? What needs to be done to achieve the right balance?

- The selection process needs better definition because it is undefined; the development process is also ad hoc.
- Recruit for the job or the capability, assess positions to determine which is needed
- Define competencies and continuity of ECQs

11. What is your perception of the competitiveness of current DoD civilians for vacant SES positions?

- Most believe current DoD SES members are not developed properly, making them less competitive
- Broad consensus that it's hard for GS 15's to compete with retired officers because system doesn't deliberately develop GS employees as well
- Former military members getting the jobs because they compete better-their prior development is richer
- Civil service employees need better development, experience in leading organizations, etc., in order to compete

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12. Should we have a "corporate" focus when selecting SES, i.e., hire those who demonstrate potential for assignment to any DoD enterprise-wide position? Or, should we have an "organizational" focus, i.e., hire those who demonstrate potential to succeed in the organization with the vacancy? (Corporate Executive versus Business Unit Executive).

- Most indicated No. The organization should recruit for vacancy, then develop the SES member for a corporate/broader perspective
- Most agreed this is not an either-or question; instead a mix of corporate and organizational focus is necessary
- Most agreed that hiring involves looking for people who have the individual aptitude and then DoD provides development tracks for those who want this

Summary of Afternoon Sessions

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General – How do we strengthen the SES Corps?

13. As we think about the objective to strengthen the SES corps, what else should we consider?

- State the problem and render clarity on what needs to be fixed and/or improved
- Communicate SES policy better
- Improve SES membership incentives; compensation as well as non tangibles like notability of service
- Incent mobility correctly (i.e. reestablish relocation pay)
- Look at Industry and adopt best practices
- Seek opportunities to link SES and G/FO communities
- Be an employer of choice for the 21st century
- Devise suggested career paths for people who want to become SES employees
- Provide opportunities for SES Corps members to dialog, brainstorm and engage

Summary of Afternoon Sessions by Component

Army

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Leadership Theme - What does it mean to be a DoD Executive?

- SES are traditionally valued as the continuity
- SES have the substantive knowledge to facilitate change
- SES are the ones who support the mission and goals of the organization

Development Theme – What does it mean to deliberately develop and manage SES careers?

- Develop a better career path
- There needs to be structured development for SES
- Link development plans with succession plans
- Develop a mentoring system for new SES
- Consider establishment of a program to integrate GS-13 and GS-14 positions into SES pool

Selection – How do we get the right talent for the right position?

- Civilian applicants are at a disadvantage when applying for SES vacancies due to a lack of development opportunities
- Pay compression removes incentives for promotion to SES, especially if it involves relocation
- Need continuity/scheduling with GO and SES moves

General – How do we strengthen the SES Corps?

- Better development of SES resources is important but mobility is not the only means; use conferences, seminars, and short rotation assignments
- Dissolve the image within DoD that SES Corp members are the primary “Scientific and Technical” experts within the services and play no role in leadership decisions
- OSD needs to gather the facts and articulate what the problems are that need to be corrected

Summary of Afternoon Sessions by Component

Navy

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Leadership Theme - What does it mean to be a DoD Executive?

- Carry fourth the strategic vision
- Manages tension between continuity and change. Career SES adds a stability factor
- Mobility and rotation should be tied to sound mission and readiness; do not employ military model

Development Theme – What does it mean to deliberately develop and manage SES careers?

- There needs to be a clear SES development structure, with clear expectations and career paths
- Resources for development need to be more readily available
- SES members should be developed at the local organizational level

Selection – How do we get the right talent for the right position?

- Concern about influx of retired military officers
- Most believe the competitiveness of current DoD civilian staff is impaired because they are not developed properly
- Many want to know what is DOD’s vision for “the right balance for a joint perspective”
- Many reported that it will be difficult to find a “joint perspective” in external candidates
- Many agreed it was useful to blend in experience outside of own organization

General – How do we strengthen the SES Corps?

- Clearly state the problem and what needs to be fixed
- Don’t assume one size fits all; preserve multiple paths
- Re-evaluate pay scale
- Leave the performance appraisal system alone

Summary of Afternoon Sessions by Component

Air Force

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Leadership Theme - What does it mean to be a DoD Executive?

- They are the decision makers, providing a unique value of continuity and corporate memory
- Balancing the military/political shifts
- Provide civilian perspective
- Create career paths (across all careers/specific functions) rather than stovepipe
- Communicate a clear role for SES
- What is the game plan to produce an SES; perceive that currently there is no deliberate plan

Development Theme – What does it mean to deliberately develop and manage SES careers?

- Start development at the GS-12 and 13 level
- Job sharing or details with other federal agencies to include interagency agreements to retain ownership of the SES, removing the main barrier to rotating assignments, losing the candidate
- More feedback and mandated mentoring
- Develop a business plan for return on investment (ROI), show how it saves resources and redirect these resources to development
- Offer incentives
- Define required skill sets and develop talent earlier so candidates are better prepared

Selection – How do we get the right talent for the right position?

- Many agreed that retired military are getting SES jobs and that GS are not getting leadership experiences
- Not investing in civilians
- Not creating opportunities for civilians to get “in-charge” leadership experience
- Define competencies and continuity of ECQs

Summary of Afternoon Sessions by Component

Air Force

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General – How do we strengthen the SES Corps?

- Have more opportunities for SES to be in charge of large organizations
- Streamline the SES selection and development process
- Some felt that the pay caps by tiers should be eliminated because they are creating a disincentive to executives who can't get to tier 3 due to the limited number of positions in tier 3
- Leverage capabilities of service
- Make the sacrifice worth it; create incentives

Summary of Afternoon Sessions by Component

Fourth Estate

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Leadership Theme - What does it mean to be a DoD Executive?

- Implement and carry out a strategic vision
- Leadership of technical competence and the leadership that comes from longevity/continuity in one position; overview and knowledge of what is needed

Development Theme – What does it mean to deliberately develop and manage SES careers?

- All agreed that “one size does not fit all”- there is diversity of need for development between components and within components, especially among offices in the Fourth Estate.
- Most recommended that SES be provided with a professional development process that is strategic, like the military’s
- Need to make mobility more attractive and less risky for SES
- Need clarity on what we are trying to fix and/or improve

Selection – How do we get the right talent for the right position?

- Establish a “time line” or career plan that outlines potential career paths for SES to include: training requirements, required skills, demonstrated performance and incentives
- Most perceived that there is a “brass ceiling”, and that civilians have not had access to career development as have military personnel, so do not have the necessary qualifications
- Most believe that a “one size fits all” selection process will limit the ability to hire and retain SES talent
- Improve incentives but recognize that incentives are different for different people

General – How do we strengthen the SES Corps?

- Provide incentives for mobility
- Devise suggested career paths for people who want to become SES
- DoD needs to provide a vision for the future and communicate the SES role in carrying out that vision

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Combatant Commands

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Leadership Theme - What does it mean to be a DoD Executive?

- Within the combatant commands, the SES leadership provides continuity, expertise, and long-term leadership
- CoCOM SES corps cross-pollinate good ideas from the services to the CoCOMS and vice versa
- Within the combatant commands, the general/flag officers have the primary war fighting leadership positions and the SES occupies positions that do not require an extensive military background.
- As with general/flag officers, people should have a joint assignment before being selected for SES ranks within DoD. This joint assignment should be based on the expanded definition of joint, which includes appropriate positions in combatant commands, OSD, DoD agencies, the Services and other Federal agencies

Development Theme – What does it mean to deliberately develop and manage SES careers?

- DoD does not have as system to grow/develop people for the SES corps. Currently, progression into the SES ranks is very much stove-piped; therefore it is extremely difficult to acquire a broad experience base.
- Need a system that identifies high potential GS-13s thru GS-15s and invests in them. This investment includes broadening assignments, schools, placement after school and broadening assignment, and realistic expectations.

Selection – How do we get the right talent for the right position?

- It is a disincentive for the civilian workforce to bring in people from the outside when the person inside is equally or better qualified. Need some way of setting realistic expectations.

Summary of Afternoon Sessions by Component

Combatant Commands

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General – How do we strengthen the SES Corps?

- Important to identify what competencies are needed in SES positions in OSD, Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, DoD agencies, DoD positions in other Federal Agencies, and select positions within the Services
- Identify which GS-13/GS-15 jobs equip people with the joint competencies that are needed in the SES corps
- Develop a program that provides potential SES contenders with the requisite competencies