THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

AUG 11 2010

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with section 1061 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 and in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I am providing my comments on the report of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Independent Panel.

I wish to thank co-chairs Secretary William Perry and Stephen Hadley and the other members of the Independent Panel for their tremendous efforts in this review of our national security. From its comments on the 2010 QDR report, to its recommendations concerning the long-term orientation of the Department, to the need for broader governmental reform, the Panel has performed a valuable public service. I strongly endorse many of the panel's key findings, in particular the need to implement a more comprehensive approach to U.S. national security. Although it has always been the case that such an approach is best suited to the pursuit of U.S. vital security interests, I am struck by how the current and projected security environment increasingly demands it. As my work to rebalance and reform the Department reinforces, I strongly agree that a "business-as-usual" approach is not acceptable – the stakes are too high and the consequences of failure too severe.

Enduring Interests and the Future Security Environment

I agree with the Panel's characterization of some of the country's enduring security interests, and would note that they mirror key priorities described in the QDR report and the National Security Strategy. Key U.S. security interests have in fact remained largely consistent during the post-World War II period. The problem is not that past and present administrations have failed to recognize and clearly define national interests, but rather that the evolution of the security environment has consistently outpaced the ability of U.S. Government institutions and approaches to adapt. It is this need to adapt in a timely manner to challenges readily apparent during ongoing operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere that has animated my approach as Secretary of Defense. The QDR reflects this focus, and I note the Panel's conclusion that

this is "a wartime QDR, prepared by a Department that is focused – understandably and appropriately – on responding to the threats America now faces and winning the wars in which America is now engaged" (page IV). Indeed, our success in today's conflicts will shape the security environment in key regions, and the lessons learned under fire will greatly influence our future force structure and leader development.

Although the 2010 QDR is a wartime QDR, it also comprehensively charts a long-term vision for a Department that will not only need to adapt to the complex challenges confronting us featured on today's battlefields, but also to threats posed by sophisticated adversaries the U.S. is likely to face in the future. The Panel's description of key trends shaping the security environment reflects those described in the QDR report.

Implementing a Comprehensive Approach to National Security

As the National Security Strategy and the QDR report reflect, we must work toward a more comprehensive "whole of government" approach to the broad range of national security challenges we face. The QDR described several initiatives, including the need to reform our approach to security assistance and building civilian capacity, which are currently the subject of interagency review. I was pleased that the Panel endorsed the establishment of pooled funding mechanisms for security capacity building, stabilization, and conflict prevention. I believe such an approach has merit. I also strongly agree with the Panel's comments on the need to reform U.S. export control regimes to move to an approach where a greater percentage of U.S. platforms are, from the outset, "built to share."

I also note that the Panel endorses the Department's approach to building the capacity of U.S. civilians to deploy overseas, to include our work developing a Civilian Expeditionary Workforce. Finally, I agree strongly with the Panel's focus on building the capacity of U.S. allies and partners, including its suggestion that helping to develop the high-end capacity of traditional U.S. allies is a critical element of defense engagement, and will feature prominently as we look to invest in key global alliances – particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

Determining Prudent Force Structure

I disagree with the Panel's view that the QDR did not provide a 20-year vision for the force and an accompanying long-term force planning construct. From its description of enduring U.S. interests, drawn from the National Security Strategy, and the long-term trends shaping U.S. security and defense strategy, to the explication of our strategic objectives and near- and long-term force sizing constructs, to the mid-term force structure requirements and long-term force evolutions needed to secure our national interests, I am confident that the 2010 QDR report constitutes perhaps the most tightly woven long-term post-Cold War defense blueprint.

I am concerned by the Panel's description of the force sizing and shaping construct in the 2010 QDR. The report specifies that our force must be "capable of protecting U.S. interests against a multiplicity of threats, including two capable nation-state aggressors." In addition, to meet my requirements for a force flexible across the spectrum of conflict, the 2010 QDR builds on and goes beyond its predecessors in also testing that force against a broad range of non-traditional challenges including homeland disasters, stabilization operations, and anti-access threats, including cyber and space challenges – the very areas the Panel suggests for emphasis – and in setting the force on a vector to meet those challenges as they expand in the future.

The 2010 QDR report breaks new ground in its use of a more rigorous approach to defense planning – employing multiple overlapping sets of scenarios to test the sufficiency of alternative force structures under various stressing conditions across a 20-year period. Through the employment of detailed scenarios that tested the force against exactly the types of threats the Panel report describes (pages 48-51), the QDR report explicitly proposes two force-sizing constructs to account for the anticipated shifts in the operational landscape: a 5-7 year timeframe focused on prevailing in today's wars; and a 7-20 year timeframe focused on building a balanced force capable of prevailing against sophisticated regional adversaries while building both the high- and low-end capacity of U.S. allies and partners. As such, while remaining grounded in current operational reality, the 2010 QDR very explicitly takes account of the importance of attending to the future.

On the details of the Independent Panel's "alternative force structure," I note the report's conclusion that "the panel largely embraces the current mix of all four services" (page 56). The Panel further endorses the QDR report's recommended end-strength for the Army and Marine Corps. I also agree with the Panel that the Air Force will need to place greater emphasis on unmanned aerial vehicles and long-range strike capabilities in the mix of capabilities it fields – both of these capabilities are highlighted in the 2010 QDR report.

I completely agree with the Panel that a strong navy is essential; however, I disagree with the Panel's recommendation that DoD should establish the 1993 Bottom Up Review's (BUR's) fleet of 346 ships as the objective target. That number was a simple projection of the then-planned size of Navy in FY 1999, not a reflection of 21st century, steady-state requirements. The fleet described in the 2010 QDR report, with its overall target of 313 to 323 ships, has roughly the same number of aircraft carriers, nuclear-powered attack submarines, surface combatants, mine warfare vessels, and amphibious ships as the larger BUR fleet. The main difference between the two fleets is in the numbers of combat logistics, mobile logistics, and support ships. Although it is true that the 2010 fleet includes fewer of these ships, they are all now more efficiently manned and operated by the Military Sealift Command and meet all of DoD's requirements.

I disagree with the Panel's assertion that the QDR report's projected force structure does not provide adequate capacity to defend the homeland during a period of ongoing contingency operations overseas. In addition to having more than 18,000 active and reserve personnel with specialized training available for potential domestic catastrophes, DoD has plans and capabilities to employ nearly 100,000 general purpose forces in response to such events. These forces would be drawn from active and reserve component personnel available in the U.S., and would be commanded and controlled by U.S. Northern Command. Were DoD required to do so, it could bring required capabilities and assets to bear effectively in a domestic incident under the National Response Framework, consistent with presidential and congressional guidance.

I agree with the Panel's general conclusion that DoD ought to enhance its overall posture and capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. As I outlined in my speech at the Naval War College in April 2009, "to carry out the missions we may face in the future… we will need numbers, speed, and the ability to operate in shallow waters." So as the Air-Sea battle concept development reaches maturation, and as DoD's review of global defense posture continues, I will be looking for ways to meet plausible security threats while emphasizing sustained forward presence – particularly in the Pacific.

I share the Panel's view that at some point, procuring higher quality platforms at great expense will lower the overall size of our force structure – making it difficult to prepare credibly for multiple contingencies while engaging in the day-to-day presence missions overseas that have proven so central to U.S. defense strategy and the maintenance of healthy alliance relations.

Finally, I agree with the Panel's views on the importance of elevating the attention paid to cyberspace. I endorse the Panel's recommendation to develop flexible approaches for attracting and retaining skilled professionals – perhaps leveraging innovative uses of the reserve component – and note that the QDR report also recommended developing a cadre of cyber professionals. I agree that as we establish U.S. Cyber Command, it will be critical to incorporate the concepts of operations and develop the right mix of capabilities required both to defend our military networks and stand ready to act outside them should we be directed to do so.

Reforming Acquisition, Personnel, and Professional Military Education

The Panel report made a number of excellent recommendations concerning acquisition and personnel issues – many of which echo those made in the QDR report, some of which are entirely compatible with our current approach, and some of which require further study.

I appreciate the Panel's endorsement of my efforts to overhaul costs by eliminating unneeded or redundant programs and activities, and to execute DoD

programs more effectively. Even as we look for savings within our current top-line, we must continue to look for ways to reform how we do business. We must shift from the 99 percent "exquisite" service-centric platforms that have proven so costly and so complex that they take forever to build, and are only deployed in very limited quantities. With the pace of technological and geopolitical change, and the range of possible contingencies, we must create an institutional bias toward the 80 percent, multi-service solution that can be produced on time, on budget, and in significant numbers. To that end, I agree with many of the Panel's recommendations concerning acquisition and contracting, and I look forward to discussing them further with Congress.

I also read with interest the Panel's views on personnel. I share the Panel's concern regarding the state of our military personnel and their families – to include the spiraling costs of military health care – and support the concept of a review of our military personnel. The venue of a commission is interesting and may be worth pursuing; however, I would like to participate in the design of the commission's composition, scope, and mission. This set of issues constitutes a massive challenge to addressing the Department's long-term needs.

I also agree with the intent of the Panel's recommendations concerning professional military education (PME). Since taking office, I have visited and spoken at all of the war colleges and service academies, and I fully concur in the need to ensure that the PME programs are given complete support. As today's conflicts make clear, we require an officer corps that is educated, adaptive, and ready to push intellectual boundaries while refining the art of war. We need to ensure the right mix of officers is given the opportunity to pursue civilian graduate programs, while ensuring that the complex requirements of modern warfare are emphasized in our PME institutions.

Thoughts on the Future of Defense Reviews

I read with interest the Panel's recommendation to discontinue the QDR process as presently constituted, in favor of the normal DoD planning, programming, and budgeting cycle. I believe the current QDR legislation has created unrealistic expectations for what any such review process or resulting report can achieve. With nearly 20 separate statutory requirements, the QDR is expected at once to demonstrate priority and focus, and to address all major defense issues relevant to a 20-year timeframe. The reality is that many issues will require detailed follow-on analysis such as the Department is now conducting on long-range strike and a number of other areas.

Regardless of whether Congress discontinues the formal QDR requirement, each President and Secretary of Defense will desire, at the beginning of an administration, to reassess the defense strategy and supporting program. Overall, the QDR process has been a useful way to assess the evolution of the security environment, to reconsider

defense strategy, and to engage in detailed analysis of whether or not the current and planned force structure is best suited to protect and advance U.S. interests.

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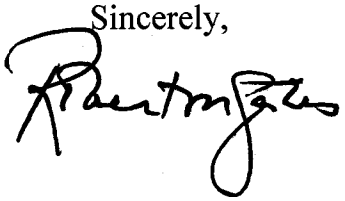
I extend my thanks to the co-chairs, Panel members, and the supporting staff of the QDR Independent Panel. As we move forward in reforming and rebalancing the DoD for the complex missions it is performing and is preparing for, I am appreciative of the thoughtful analysis that the Independent Panel has provided. I look forward to working with members of Congress as they consider the important recommendations in this report.

Sincerely,



cc:
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member