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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
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SUBJECT: The Next Two Links to the Force of the Future

Today we have the finest fighting force our world has ever known. To maintain this advantage and enhance the warfighting and operational excellence of our force, we must recruit and retain the very best talent our country has to offer, amid changes in generations, technologies, and labor markets.

On November 18, 2015, I announced the first set of Force of the Future initiatives, designed to increase the Department's permeability to new people and new ideas—among them, expanding the corporate fellows programs to increase the number of Service members with experience in the commercial sector, launching the Defense Digital Service to increase information technology innovation in the Department by leveraging private sector expertise, and establishing the Office of People Analytics to harness the Department's big data capabilities in better managing our talent. On January 29, 2016, I announced a second set of Force of the Future initiatives aimed at improving retention of our military Service members through enhanced family support, including establishing a uniform standard for paid maternity leave of 12 weeks, seeking authority from Congress to expand paternity and adoption leave, improving the availability of child care services and mothers' rooms on military installations, and piloting TRICARE programs to enhance family planning flexibility.

Concurrently, the Department has modernized its military retirement system, opened all military career fields to women, and proposed seminal reforms to the Goldwater-Nichols Act—all with a view to enhancing warfighting readiness and joint operational effectiveness.

We can and must do more to ensure that our military continues to be as ready to meet the challenges of the future as it is to meet the challenges of today. For this reason, I am pleased to announce the next two links in our Force of the Future initiative—one focused on making common sense improvements to the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) system and the other on developing our more than 700,000-strong DoD civilian workforce—in tandem, reflecting our staunch commitment to the principle of “one team-one fight”.

The “up-or-out” system now embodied in DOPMA was first introduced almost a hundred years ago to ensure the continual renewal of our officer corps with fresh blood and new ideas. This system continues to serve its purpose today, and we continue to benefit from the leadership and innovation that it brings to the ranks of our military. As I have said in the context of our Goldwater-Nichols review, however, no organization is perfect, and any system can be improved. In the case of DOPMA, there are situations where applying a “one-size-fits-all” approach to military personnel management works to our detriment. In some cases, DOPMA proves too rigid—providing little incentive for officers to focus or specialize, even when so doing would enhance military readiness. Our challenge is to bring new flexibility to the system without undermining the valuable purposes that it continues to serve.

To this end, I am asking Congress for authority to grant the military Services flexibility in certain aspects of the military personnel management system that would:

- Enable experts and specialists in critical, high-demand skills to join the military at a mid-career level, in the same manner currently authorized for medical officers.
- Enable the Secretaries of the Military Departments to approve requests by military officers to be temporarily excluded from consideration by a promotion board so they may undertake activities to deepen their expertise without adverse impact on career advancement.
- Incentivize the best military performers by authorizing the Secretaries of the Military Departments to adjust the lineal numbers of officers selected for promotion by a statutory board, so as to promote officers of particular merit first.
- Authorize the Secretaries of the Military Departments, with the approval of the Secretary of Defense, to waive select DOPMA requirements with respect to a critical career field.

I have also approved the following additional military personnel initiatives:

- Modernization of U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM).
- Expansion of Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies (JAMRS) micro-targeting to create a recruiting database.

The DoD civilian workforce also requires our attention as we look to the future. The global enterprise that is the Department of Defense does everything from delivering babies to delivering bombs on target. We work on every continent, on and under every ocean, in space, and in cyberspace. None of this would be possible without our capable and dedicated civilian workforce. Our national security has long been enhanced by the partnership between our military and civilian workforces and the unique capabilities that each workforce brings to the table.

Our civilian workforce initiatives are designed to extend this advantage and leverage the call of our Department's unique mission to encourage and incentivize public service, streamlining the path to DoD employment for the most talented men and women our country has to offer. In many respects, these initiatives propose programs in parallel to those available to our military personnel, further harnessing DoD civilians as force multipliers.

With a view to honing the capabilities of our civilian force, I am asking Congress for the authority to:

- Enable the Department to recruit and hire “on-the-spot” the best and brightest on-campus talent by authorizing the direct hire of students and recent graduates into the civilian workforce.
- Establish a two-way exchange program through which DoD and the private-sector can temporarily exchange employees.
- Increase the cap on payments under the Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP) program.
- Provide 6 weeks of paid parental leave for DoD civilian employees in connection with the birth or adoption of a child.

I have also approved the following civilian personnel initiatives:

- Growing the number of Highly Qualified Experts (HQEs) and broadening the criteria applicable to HQE hiring.
- Increasing the use of career-broadening rotational programs.
- Increasing the use of DoD's Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) Defense Scholarships to attract individuals to mission-critical science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations.
- Allowing DoD civilian employees to work part-time for the first year after the birth or adoption of a child, or subsequent to beginning service as a foster parent, “phasing in” their return to full-time employment.
- Expanding the use of the Student Training and Academic Recruitment (STAR) program.
- Better leveraging civilian employee training funds by establishing annual objectives for funding the training and development of the civilian workforce.
- Establishing a working group to identify actionable program, policy, and process changes to eliminate or minimize barriers to employee mobility between DoD components.

Given the importance of these initiatives, together with our previously announced Force of the Future initiatives, the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will meet periodically with the Services and DoD civilian leadership to ensure effective implementation. The unpredictable landscape in which we operate requires us to continually revisit, improve, and evolve our personnel management processes to ensure we optimize and retain our best talent; as such, I remain committed to pursuing additional reforms going forward.

Attachment:  
Fact Sheet

