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FOREIGN AREA OFFICER PROGRAM CHALLENGED BUT NOT DEAD, SAY ARMY  
SUPPORTERS

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## AUTHORIZING PANELS DIFFER OVER ARSENAL SHIP, CVN-77, LPD-18, DDG-51

The House and Senate committees bearing responsibility for authorizing defense funds for the coming fiscal year differed widely over several Navy ship procurement programs, including the DDG-51 destroyer, the LPD-18 amphibious ship, and the CVN-77 aircraft carrier. In all but one of these -- the LPD-18 -- the Senate Armed Services Committee provided substantially more procurement funds for the ships than its counterpart, the House National Security Committee.

**Arsenal Ship:** The Senate committee added \$25 million to the administration's request for \$103 million in research and development funds on the Arsenal Ship. The House committee zeroed the request.

**DDG-51:** The Senate panel granted the Pentagon's \$2.8 billion request for the procurement of three Arleigh Burke class destroyers, and added \$720 million to buy a fourth ship, which the committee said in a June 13 statement would "save approximately \$230 million on the marginal cost of this ship." The House committee funded the requested \$2.8 billion.

**CVN-77:** While the Pentagon had requested \$17.9 million for advance procurement on the CVN-77 aircraft carrier, the Senate committee moved to accelerate the procurement and construction of components on the ship, saying this "offers an opportunity for \$600 million in cost savings." The panel also authorized a \$17 million increase in research and development funds "that will permit CVN-77 to serve as a transition carrier to the next generation of aircraft carriers."

The House National Security Committee authorized the same increase in CVN-77 r&d funds with an eye toward transition, but omitted the Senate panel's extra funds for advance procurement.

**LPD-18:** Although the Pentagon did not request advance procurement funding for this amphibious ship, the House National Security Committee saw merit in doing so, noting that "the chief of naval operations listed the LPD-18 among his top unfunded procurement priorities for fiscal year 1998," according to a statement issued by the committee on June 12. -- *Elaine M. Grossman*

## ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GIVES 'TENTATIVE' NOD TO CAREER TRACK PLAN

On June 5, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Dennis Reimer gave tentative approval to the latest plan developed by the Officer Personnel Management System XXI task force, known as "Option 2.75," said an Army official. The OPMS XXI Task Force -- presided over by the head of the officer personnel management system, Maj. Gen. David Ohle -- will create a new career track framework that is intended to improve the promotion prospects of commissioned personnel over an array of fields.

Four career fields will be created: operations, Army management, operational support, and information operations. Now, rather than having to compete for promotions against officers with command experience, the officers in a non-command track will compete against officers within their own field for promotion (*Inside the Pentagon*, May 15, p1; and *Inside the Army*, May 19, p6).

According to the Army official, Reimer "approved in principle the recommendations of the Task Force," but wants the Army Board of Directors, a four-star advisory group to the chief of staff, to have a final look at the OPMS XXI implementation plan before giving his final sign-off.

The official said that Reimer's final approval for Option 2.75 will either come as early as July 3 or perhaps on July 19-20, when the Board of Directors meets. If approval is forthcoming, phased implementation of Option 2.75 will get under way by Oct. 1. -- *Holly Porteous*

## FOREIGN AREA OFFICER PROGRAM CHALLENGED BUT NOT DEAD, SAY ARMY SUPPORTERS

Proponents of the Army Foreign Area Officer program are looking to the Officer Personnel Management System XXI Task Force to reinvigorate a function that has suffered under the post-Cold War drawdown (see related story). As one former Army official explained, after the program was built up during the Reagan administration, many FAO personnel "were shown the door" in the ensuing drawdown because they could not compete in an up-or-out system that emphasized command experience over scholarship.

The system essentially forced FAOs to concentrate their effort on jumping through the command track hoops and giving short shrift to their foreign area studies. As one Army official put it, this has created the problem of "fake FAOs," who receive promotions over potentially more knowledgeable colleagues and who, in the view of this source, erode the credibility of the program.

**The same official went on to say, however, that while the FAO program may "have some skin infections," it is by no means cancerous.** "The chief of staff is high on the [FAO] program," said the official, adding that changes to the personnel promotion system will go a long way toward reviving the program.

The FAO program produces officers who are almost ubiquitous -- working in the defense attache system, Office of the Secretary of Defense, State Department, Joint Staff, Defense Intelligence Agency, combined and joint com-

mands, Department of Army staff, Army major commands and service schools, and security assistance programs.

Ideas about how FAO should be reshaped range from ditching the program altogether to remarrying it with Army civil affairs. As one Army Reserve officer put it, "Embassies and attaches seem a bit archaic in the age of CNN diplomacy. The 'institutional' knowledge suggested by FAO programs seems too bureaucratic, too "like the thing, not the thing" to me."

The officer suggested that local area expertise is best sought from members of the local population, a practice long followed by the Army's psychological operations and civil affairs practitioners, who routinely run leaflets and radio broadcast messages by local nationals for final review.

Another Army officer in the FAO program disputed this idea, saying that unlike the DOD's practice of contracting linguists for language capabilities not maintained within the military, "you cannot rent a FAO" because the tasks they perform require a high degree of military as well as cultural expertise.

A former FAO who now works as a civilian contractor for DOD said that the "new world order" demands greater attention to programs that enhance the military's ability to deal with contingencies that demand finesse over firepower. "When the Army was much larger," said the former FAO, "it had the flexibility to have 'oddball' programs [like FAO] . . . As armies shrink, they tend to be brought down to the traditional army [of infantry, tanks, and artillery]. In [this] changed world, we can't have this kind of traditional retrenchment." -- *Holly Porteous*

## DEFENSE BILL HELD UP IN SENATE . . . begins on page one

understand compromise," he said. "But I don't understand knocking people down and stepping in their faces. . . This is America. Why should we not have price competition?"

According to a June 13 statement released by the Senate committee, the bill it marked up last week would:

- "Adjust the 60/40 rule to 50/50;
- "Adjust the law so that work performed by private companies at public depots will be counted as public sector depot maintenance rather than private sector depot maintenance;
- "Require the efficient operations of the remaining public air logistics centers (ALCs) prior to implementation of any privatization-in-place at former ALC locations; [and]
- "Require the Department of Defense to preserve a core depot capability that could maintain the types of weapons systems that the warfighting CINCs [commanders-in-chief] identify as mission essential."

The administration's decision to "privatize in place" Kelly Air Force Base, TX, and McClellan AFB, CA, following the 1995 Base Closure and Realignment Commission round, forms the basis of much resistance to future BRAC rounds among lawmakers (*Inside the Pentagon*, June 12, p1). Several provisions of the Senate Armed Services Committee's bill reflect Senate discontent with the experimental privatization the administration undertook two years ago with an eye toward preserving jobs. But many observers interpreted the White House measure as skirting the intent of the BRAC for political reasons.

The 50/50 provision passed by the Senate panel last week would provide some relief the Pentagon requested on the standing prohibition against contracting out to industry over 40 percent of its depot maintenance. The Defense Department's recently concluded Quadrennial Defense Review asks Congress to lift the 60/40 provision as a means of saving funds it could apply toward modernization.

**But for its part, the California delegation to the Senate, Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, "will use any parliamentary tool in their power" to block the FY-98 defense authorization bill from coming up for debate on the Senate floor, so long as it continues to contain the depot maintenance provisions passed by the committee, according to Susan Kennedy, a spokeswoman for Feinstein. The two California senators, along with Gramm and fellow Texas Republican Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, are blocking unanimous consent to allow the bill to come to the Senate floor.**

Beginning on Tuesday (June 17), the four senators engaged in negotiations with Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS), as well as other senators with an interest in depot maintenance issues, on what it might take to resolve the impasse and begin formal debate over the bill. Participants in the negotiations included Sens. James Inhofe (R-OK) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT), both of whose states are home to Air Force air logistics centers. But at press time (June 18), the senators were still at loggerheads.

In his June 18 Senate floor statement, Gramm proposed allowing the private sector to compete with the public depots for maintenance work, but awarding contracts to the government even if its bid loses by less than 10 percent. Any public depot loss of over 10 percent cost, though, would go to a private competitor, under Gramm's proposal.

Kennedy said that like Gramm, Feinstein is not holding out for elimination of the bill provisions on depot maintenance, but would entertain reasonable alternatives to the wording. Feinstein would like to see the competitive process at McClellan, in which two private companies are bidding to perform maintenance work, continue as planned, Kennedy said. She added that Feinstein would support the movement to a 50/50 arrangement in public-private depot maintenance if "non-core" depot work is exempted from the rule.

Another Senate aide likewise argued for private industry to be offered additional depot work, noting a recent finding by the Congressional Budget Office that up to \$1 billion a year could be saved across the services through such privatization. According to this official, Gramm and others would like to see a full and open process of bidding for depot work, rather than "sole-sourcing" maintenance work to the public depots. -- *Elaine M. Grossman*