



Department of War

DIRECTIVE

NUMBER 1403.03

October 25, 2007

Incorporating Change 1, March 2, 2026

USW(P&R)

SUBJECT: The Career Lifecycle Management of the Senior Executive Service Leaders Within the Department of War

- References:**
- (a) Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "DoD Directives Review – Phase II," July 13, 2005
 - (b) DoD Directive 5124.02, "Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R))," June 23, 2008, as amended
 - (c) DoD Directive 1403.1, "The Senior Executive Service and Equivalent-Level Positions and Personnel," October 18, 1982
 - (d) Sections 3131-3134, 3393, 3395, and 4314 of title 5, United States Code
 - (e) through (h), see Enclosure 1

1. PURPOSE

This Directive:

1.1. In accordance with the guidance in Reference (a) and the authority in Reference (b), augments Reference (c) and implements Reference (d) to prescribe policy and assign responsibilities for the lifecycle management of the DoW Senior Executive Service (SES).

1.2. Establishes an overarching policy governing the lifecycle management of SES positions within the DoW as authorized by Reference (b).

1.3. Establishes the DoD Executive Advisory Board (DEAB) to advise the DoW on the lifecycle management of the SES.

1.4. Establishes a corps of key SES positions that require an enterprise perspective, hereafter referred to as "enterprise positions."

2. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

2.1. This Directive applies to the OSW, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoW Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoW (hereafter referred to collectively as the “DoW Components”). The provisions of this Directive may be administratively extended to defense intelligence senior executives.

2.2. Its provisions cover:

2.2.1. The Career Reserved and General DoW SES positions of Reference (d).

2.2.2. Career SES members as defined in Reference (d).

3. DEFINITIONS

Terms used in this Directive are defined in Enclosure 2.

4. POLICY

It is DoW policy to institute a deliberate, systematic, and predictable approach to management of the career lifecycle of DoW SES leaders to produce the best civilian career leadership cadre possible – one that is fully integrated with other components of DoW executive leadership, general and flag officers (G/FOs), and political leaders. The DoW vision for the management and development of senior executives is that of a senior civilian workforce that possesses a broad background of skills and experiences that will have prepared them to support the warfighter and meet the continually changing management requirements of the DoW.

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5.1. Executive Management. Executive management of career SES executives shall be in accordance with the following principles:

5.1.1. The career SES corps shall be a vital part of the DoW executive leadership team, which includes G/FOs and politically appointed executives.

5.1.2. SES career executives are strong corporate citizens and leaders who exhibit the highest standards of ethical behavior, view their responsibilities in the context of the larger DoW enterprise and public policy interests, and work effectively across organizational boundaries and functional areas. They shall exhibit:

5.1.2.1. Enterprise-spanning perspective.

5.1.2.2. Strategic vision and strategic thinking ability.

5.1.2.3. Competency in joint matters.

5.1.2.4. Global and cultural astuteness.

5.1.2.5. Business acumen.

5.1.2.6. Leadership proficiency.

5.1.2.7. Results-driven focus.

5.1.2.8. Capability to build partnerships and communicate effectively.

5.1.3. Executive management is a critical function of the DoW and must be carefully and deliberately managed. Throughout the career lifecycle framework (recruitment, selection, development, performance management, succession and sustainment of talent, and separation), executives will be guided through:

5.1.3.1. Core Precepts. A set of core precepts will guide career lifecycle decisions and ensure the Department's needs are weighed as heavily as DoW Component needs in these decisions.

5.1.3.2. Recruitment. Recruitment and selection will be made considering a mix of talent from internal and external sources consistent with Reference (d) and section 317.501 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (Reference (e)).

5.1.3.2.1. All Executives must sign an agreement for reassignments within and outside the geographic area prior to occupying positions covered by this Directive.

5.1.3.2.2. All Executives will be given advance notice of reassignments consistent with section 317.901 of Reference (e).

5.1.3.3. Development. Deliberate development, in consultation with supervisors and mentors, will occur through a structured series of well-planned developmental and educational experiences, often including reassignments to more challenging positions.

5.1.3.3.1. The developmental model will encourage the accumulation of a multifaceted portfolio of experiences as a matter of course. The objective is to build executives with strong skills to lead and operate effectively across organizational and functional boundaries.

5.1.3.3.2. SES career executives may be reassigned by the DoW Component Heads to provide for the development of executive capabilities and to meet shifting organizational priorities.

5.1.3.3.3. Career executives occupying enterprise positions may be reassigned to any DoW position for which they are qualified in accordance with section 3395 of Reference (d) and section 317.901 of Reference (e), and will include consultation with the respective DoW Component Head prior to effecting reassignments.

5.1.3.4. Performance Management. A performance management culture that encourages and rewards creativity, innovation, intelligent risk-taking, and critical thinking will be sustained.

5.1.3.5. Talent Management and Succession Planning. Career SES leadership capability will be sustained to meet mission requirements. Positions will be managed using a comprehensive strategic planning process. Organizational and individual SES capability will be assessed, at least annually to:

5.1.3.5.1. Understand the competencies available in the career SES corps to meet mission requirements.

5.1.3.5.2. Diagnose individual executive talent for development and assignment.

5.1.3.5.3. Identify where additional resources should be directed to fill gaps.

5.1.3.5.4. Identify enterprise positions that require critical review and attention.

5.2. Position Management. Career SES positions shall be managed based on the following principles:

5.2.1. Career SES positions differ in scope, influence, accountability, and impact.

5.2.2. A subset of SES positions will be identified as enterprise positions.

5.2.2.1. Enterprise positions have unique demands of scope and breadth, influence, and impact and will affect organizational outcomes more significantly.

5.2.2.2. Enterprise positions require competency in joint matters and broad, enterprise-spanning perspective.

5.2.2.3. Enterprise position selections will require the Head of Components to confer with the Deputy Secretary of War (DepSecWar) prior to confirming a selection.

5.2.3. Career SES positions will be supported by a common tier structure as established by the DepSecWar to provide transparency and comparability in executive position and compensation management.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1. The DepSecWar shall:

6.1.1. Establish the DEAB and appoint DEAB members representing SES leaders and G/FOs from across the DoW Components to advise and provide recommendations on career SES matters (see paragraph 6.5.). The members will represent a balance of career and non-career SES leaders and G/FOs from across the DoW Components.

6.1.2. Approve a list of positions designated as enterprise positions that have been nominated by the DoW Component Heads and recommended by the DEAB.

6.1.3. Confer on appointments of SES executives for enterprise positions based on DoW

Component Head selection.

6.2. The Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (USW(P&R)) shall:

6.2.1. Establish policy for the lifecycle management of the SES and enterprise positions consistent with merit system principles.

6.2.2. Establish DoW core precepts, as recommended by the DEAB and supplemented as necessary by the DoW Components, to be used by all DoW Components to ensure consistent, transparent, and deliberate career lifecycle management of all SES executives.

6.2.3. Issue policy and guidance that shapes the executive management framework, precepts, and policies for the management of the SES and enterprise positions.

6.2.4. Provide advice, policy, and guidance to be used by the DEAB.

6.2.5. Manage and oversee implementation of this Directive.

6.3. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Civilian Personnel Policy, under the USW(P&R), shall:

6.3.1. Advise on policy and guidance for the executive management framework and its strategic policies.

6.3.2. Serve as the Executive Director and provide operational, administrative, and policy support to the DEAB.

6.3.3. Monitor the program requirements and implementation and provide oversight to ensure compliance with the requirements of the policies of this Directive.

6.4. The Heads of the DoW Components with independent appointing authority shall:

6.4.1. Hold full responsibility for managing the career lifecycle of their SES members, within the context of the DoW executive management lifecycle framework and through, at a minimum, the application of DoW core precepts at each stage of the lifecycle.

6.4.2. Establish a centralized management structure to effectively govern and manage the SES career executives. A centralized organization will be established to support the DepSecWar.

6.4.3. Select the candidates to fill SES and enterprise positions. Confer with the DepSecWar on selections made for enterprise positions as provided in subparagraph 6.1.3.

6.4.4. Nominate SES positions to be designated as enterprise positions.

6.4.5. Select SES leaders and G/FOs to represent their DoW Component on the DEAB.

6.4.6. Submit SES leader and G/FO nominations to the DEAB to serve as representatives of SES leaders and G/FOs from across the DoW Components.

6.4.7. Provide DoW Component insight on best practice approaches to the career lifecycle management of the SES for the DoW.

6.4.8. Establish controls to ensure equitable treatment of all executives when organizational decisions require a reassignment outside the commuting area.

6.4.9. Monitor the implementation of, and ensure compliance with, the requirements of the policies of this Directive.

6.4.10. Establish the DoW Component management structures to include Executive Resource Boards (ERBs) to govern and manage the SES career executives effectively (see paragraph 6.6.).

6.5. The DEAB shall:

6.5.1. Ensure continuity of the highest caliber of SES leadership.

6.5.2. Define core precepts for the lifecycle management decisions.

6.5.3. Recommend at least annually a list of enterprise positions for DepSecWar approval.

6.5.3.1. For career positions in the legal field, obtain the concurrence of the General Counsel of the Department of War, prior to recommending the positions to the DepSecWar in accordance with DoD Directives 5145.01 and 5145.04 (References (f) and (g)).

6.5.3.2. For career SES positions in the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, obtain the concurrence of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense prior to recommending the positions to the DepSecWar.

6.5.4. Validate the process used for selecting individuals for enterprise positions.

6.5.5. Analyze the trends in career SES selections and assignments to inform policy decisions and ensure compliance with the requirements of this Directive.

6.6. The DoW ERBs shall:

6.6.1. Conduct the merit staffing process for career SES positions.

6.6.2. Identify and recommend DoW Component enterprise positions for DEAB review and DepSecWar approval.

6.6.3. Perform the strategic planning processes in accordance with subparagraph 5.1.3.5.

7. SUMMARY OF CHANGE 1

The changes to this issuance are administrative and update language to comply with Executive Order 14173 (Reference (h)) and the October 10, 2025 Secretary of War Memorandum (Reference (i)).

8. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Directive is effective immediately.



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Enclosures - 2

- E1. References, continued
- E2. Definitions

E1. ENCLOSURE 1

REFERENCES, continued

- (e) Part 317 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, as amended
- (f) DoD Directive 5145.01, "General Counsel of the Department of Defense," January 17, 2025
- (g) DoD Directive 5145.04, "Defense Legal Services Agency (DLSA)," April 16, 2012, as amended
- (h) Executive Order 14173, "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity," January 21, 2025
- (i) Secretary of War Memorandum, "Department of War Secondary Titles," October 10, 2025

E2. ENCLOSURE 2

DEFINITIONS

E2.1. Career Lifecycle. The typical lifecycle includes recruitment, selection, development, utilization, performance management, succession and sustainment of talent, and separation. Each stage varies in duration and typically involves important decisions regarding an individual's career planning.

E2.2. Corporate Citizenship. That part of DoW business strategy that shapes the values underpinning the mission and the choices made each day by its executives as they engage with stakeholders and employees of the DoW. These values are integrated into and aligned with DoW strategic plans.

E2.3. DoD Executive Advisory Board (DEAB). An advisory board of Senior Executive Service (SES) leaders and general and flag officer leaders from across the DoW Components, established by this Directive to advise the DepSecWar and other DoW senior leaders on the policy and management of the SES career executives.

E2.4. Enterprise Positions. DoW career SES positions that are determined by the DepSecWar to be the most influential and critical to accomplishing the Secretary of War's vision and strategic priorities, such that they warrant deliberate management at the highest levels of the DoW.

E2.5. Enterprise-wide Perspective. A broad point of view of the DoW mission and an understanding of individual or organizational responsibilities in relation to the larger DoW strategic priorities. The perspective is shaped by experience and education and characterized by a strategic, top-level focus on broad requirements, joint experiences, fusion of information, collaboration, and vertical and horizontal integration of information.

E2.6. Executive. U.S. citizen appropriated fund employees assigned to the positions in the SES as defined under section 3132 of Reference (d).

E2.7. Joint Matters, Joint Perspective and/or Joint Environment. Integrated operations involving multi-Service, multinational, interagency, and non-governmental partners under unified action across domains such as land, sea, air, space, and the information environment.

E2.8. Reassignment. The movement of an executive from one authorized DoW position to another. This includes movement within and across DoW Components.

E2.9. Tier Structure. Divisions of the Executive Schedule rate of basic pay that distinguishes Senior Executives' scope, influence accountability, and impact within the DoW.