



DoD INSTRUCTION 3000.15

PLAN REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

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Approved by: Mark T. Esper, Secretary of Defense

Purpose: This issuance establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and provides procedures for DoD distribution of planning guidance and the review and approval of contingency plans, global integration frameworks (GIFs), and campaign plans.

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SECTION 1: GENERAL ISSUANCE INFORMATION

1.1. APPLICABILITY.

This issuance applies to OSD, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands (CCMDs), the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoD (referred to collectively in this issuance as the “DoD Components”).

1.2. POLICY.

a. The contingency plan, GIF, and campaign plan review and approval process is the primary mechanism by which the DoD oversees planning guidance implementation. This process will:

(1) Provide the President and Secretary of Defense with feasible and risk- and resource-informed military options to prepare for, and respond to, designated crises and support implementation of the national defense strategy (NDS).

(2) Be iterative and flexible, allowing for additional authoritative guidance, development, and revision as warranted, throughout the planning process.

(3) Use CJCS, Combatant Commander (CCDR), and Service Chief military advice for evaluating a plan’s feasibility and the risk associated with its execution.

(4) Be informed by independent civilian official analysis of military plans and supporting data.

(5) Encourage timely and effective communication among stakeholders to build a shared understanding of the planning problem and ensure synchronized plan development.

b. Secretary of Defense approval of contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans confirms that such plans have been completed in accordance with applicable policy guidance, including the guidance in this issuance, and represent an acceptable level of risk.

c. After Secretary of Defense approval, lead and supporting planning organizations will continue efforts to ensure that the DoD is prepared to execute the plan if directed.

d. Contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans will:

(1) Be threat- or policy-based, resource-informed, and designed to meet the directed end-states.

(2) Be rapidly adaptable to changes in policy, planning guidance, and the international security environment.

e. DoD will limit dissemination of Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG), operational plans, and information about potential future military plans to only those personnel and activities with a mission-critical role in the production, approval, or execution of those plans.

SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY (USD(P)).

Under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, and in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.01 and Sections 113(g)(3)(A) and 134(b)(2) of Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.), the USD(P):

a. Prepares for approval by the Secretary of Defense written guidance on preparing and reviewing contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans in the form of the CPG or Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF) at least every 2 years for presidential approval. This guidance includes:

(1) How limited existing forces and resources will be prioritized to achieve the objectives and priorities described in the NDS.

(2) The relative priority of contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans, specific force levels, planning effort levels, and supporting resource levels projected to be available for the timespan for which such plans will be effective.

(3) Prioritized global, regional, and functional policy objectives and end-states that the joint force should plan to achieve through contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans.

(4) Policy and strategic assumptions that will guide military planning, including the role of U.S. allies and partners.

(5) Security cooperation priorities.

(6) Guidance on global posture and global force management.

(7) Guidance on U.S. and DoD nuclear policy.

b. Provides time-sensitive planning guidance to the CJCS and the CCDRs.

c. Convenes plan reviews and supports Secretary of Defense plan reviews for contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans; and ensures coordination of such plans, GIFs, and campaign plans with DoD Components, as appropriate.

d. Oversees the plan review process to ensure that plans can be used as the basis for strategic execution based on, but not limited to:

(1) Alignment with national-level guidance and objectives.

(2) Designations to meet the directed end-states.

(3) Compliance with applicable policy guidance.

- (4) Risk levels the Secretary of Defense deems acceptable.
 - (5) Alignment with Secretary of Defense-approved assumptions, limitations, and restrictions.
 - (6) Threat basis and resource information.
 - (7) Integration with other relevant plans.
 - (8) Transportation feasibility.
- e. Recommends plan approval decisions to the Secretary of Defense.
 - f. Review and approves contingency plan, GIF, and campaign plan MFRs as directed by the Secretary of Defense.
 - g. Oversees the release of plans and plans-related information to stakeholders outside DoD on a need-to-know basis.
 - (1) Provides guidance on, and oversees, the release of plans and plan information to U.S. Government departments and agencies, and notifies the Secretary of Defense.
 - (2) Reviews and submits DoD Component requests to release plans and plan information to foreign governments for Secretary of Defense approval.
 - (3) Provides guidance on, and oversees, the release of defense support of civil authorities plans and plan information to State and local authorities.

2.2. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR STRATEGY, PLANS, AND CAPABILITIES (ASD(SPC)).

Under the authority, direction, and control of the USD(P), the ASD(SPC):

- a. Oversees the development, coordination, and circulation of written guidance for preparing and reviewing contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans to assist the Secretary of Defense and the USD(P), in accordance with Section 134(b)(2) of Title 10, U.S.C.
- b. Supports the Secretary of Defense and the USD(P) in their reviews of contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans.
- c. Oversees analyses, develops policies, provides advice, makes recommendations, and issues guidance on contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans.

2.3. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PLANS AND POSTURE (DASD(P&P)).

Under the authority, direction, and control of the ASD(SPC), the DASD(P&P) oversees the CPG development and ensures contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans adhere to DoD planning guidance and policy. In performing these responsibilities, the DASD(P&P):

- a. Assists the USD(P) by addressing requests for CPG, OSD plan reviews, and sharing or disclosing plans-related information outside the DoD.
- b. Develops systems and standards for administering, managing, reviewing, and evaluating approved plans.
- c. Oversees OSD plan review scheduling, coordination, and implementation.
- d. Convenes Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense-level plan reviews.
- e. Consolidates, analyzes, executes, and records plan reviews for the Secretary of Defense and the USD(P).
- f. Provides recommendations to the USD(P), at the strategic level, on whether plans can be executed based on, but not limited to, the criteria in Paragraph 2.1.d.
- g. Recommends to the Secretary of Defense and the USD(P) the following regarding OSD plan reviews for contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans:
 - (1) Number, timing, and agenda.
 - (2) Whether they will take place as in-person briefings or video conferences or through written correspondence.
- h. Coordinates reviews of contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans among OSD Components.
- i. Coordinates Secretary of Defense review and approval of contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans among DoD Components.
- j. Monitors and oversees the implementation of plan review decisions and keeps the Secretary of Defense and plan review participants informed of progress.
- k. Requires that assigned personnel have sufficient security clearances and access, including alternative compensatory control measures, special access programs, and special technical operation portions to support the plan review and approval process.

2.4. SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS.

Under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, the Secretaries of the Military Departments:

- a. Participate in plan reviews as directed by the Secretary of Defense.
- b. Designate and make staff available to participate in USD(P)- and DASD(P&P)-level reviews of contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans.

2.5. CJCS.

Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, and in accordance with Section 153 of Title 10, U.S.C., the CJCS:

- a. Provides guidance in accordance with Section 113(g)(3)(D) of Title 10, U.S.C and the CPG for preparing and reviewing contingency plans that conform to policy guidance from the President and the Secretary of Defense.
- b. Develops strategic frameworks and prepares strategic plans to guide using and employing military force and related activities across all geographic regions and military functions and domains, including GIFs and global campaign plans (GCPs).
- c. Prepares joint logistic and mobility plans to support achieving NDS objectives and priorities, and recommends the assignment of armed forces responsibilities to the Secretary of Defense in accordance with such plans.
- d. Provides implementation guidance in accordance with Section 113(g)(3)(D) of Title 10, U.S.C. and the CPG and/or GEF to the joint force on plan management and review.
- e. Ensures that plans are feasible, suitable, acceptable, and complete and, as appropriate, provides military analysis, options, or plans for the Secretary of Defense.
- f. Assesses joint force capability and capacity, including sourcing feasibility, logistics supportability, and transportation feasibility, to conduct contingency plans and campaign plans.
- g. Advises the Secretary of Defense on developing policy guidance for preparing and reviewing contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans.
- h. Provides an independent assessment and advice on military risk and a recommendation on plan approval to the Secretary of Defense.
- i. Advises the Secretary of Defense on critical deficiencies and strengths in force capabilities (e.g., workforce, logistics, intelligence, and mobility support) identified during the preparation and review of contingency plans. Assesses the effect of such deficiencies and strengths on meeting national security objectives and policy and on strategic plans.
- j. Participates in reviewing contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans as directed by the Secretary of Defense.
- k. Designates and makes staff available to participate on behalf of the CJCS for USD(P)- and DASD(P&P)-level reviews of contingency plans, GIFs, and campaign plans.

- l. Provides guidance for the plans review and approval process across the joint force.
- m. In accordance with Section 153 of Title 10, U.S.C., advises the Secretary of Defense and recommends allocating and transferring forces among combatant commands to address global threats.
- n. At the Secretary of Defense's directions, participates in preparing combined military plans in conjunction with foreign armed forces.
- o. Provides GCPs and GIFs to the USD(P), including available supporting data and analysis in addition to alternative compensatory control measures, special access programs, and special technical operation portions of each plan or framework.

2.6. CCDRS.

The CCDRs:

- a. Develop plans in accordance with guidance from the President, the Secretary of Defense, the USD(P), and the CJCS.
- b. Support and participate in the plan review process identified in this issuance and in accordance with CJCS guidance.
- c. Through the CJCS, provide the DASD(P&P) with assigned contingency and campaign plans, including available supporting data and analysis, in addition to alternative compensatory control measures, special access programs, and special technical operation portions of each plan.
- d. Designate and make staff available to maintain and communicate with stakeholders throughout the planning process and represent their respective CCMDs at plan reviews.
- e. Participate in plan reviews at the Secretary of Defense's direction.
- f. Through the CJCS, request a review schedule for assigned plans.
- g. Request Secretary of Defense authorization, through the USD(P), for sharing plans or plans-related information with foreign governments.
- h. Inform the Secretary of Defense, in writing, through the CJCS to the USD(P):
 - (1) Of emergent conditions or deficiencies that significantly increase a plan's risk for execution or undermines its feasibility.
 - (2) If authority, direction, or control with respect to the commands or forces assigned to the command, or support from another CCMD, is insufficient to accomplish assigned planning tasks or command effectively.
- i. If necessary, request additional planning guidance at any time in the planning process.

SECTION 3: CONTINGENCY PLAN REVIEWS

3.1. ROLES.

- a. The Secretary of Defense directs the contingency plan review and approval process and determines the number, timing, and agenda of plan reviews and whether they will take place as in-person briefings or video conferences or through written correspondence.
- b. CCDRs prepare contingency plans to address directed scenarios, including operational and concept plans. They will provide contingency plans to the CJCS and the USD(P) for review.
- c. In coordination with the Joint Staff Strategy, Plans, and Policy Directorate (J5), the DASD(P&P) will recommend a 12-month schedule to the USD(P) for reviewing and obtaining Secretary of Defense approval of contingency plans. The USD(P), in coordination with the OSD Component heads, will review and make recommendations concerning approval or disapproval of the plans and forward them to the Secretary of Defense for review and final action.

3.2. PROCESS.

DASD(P&P)- and USD(P)-level plan reviews will precede Secretary of Defense plan reviews. CCMD contingency plan reviews will typically follow a three-step process, with each step consisting of one or more in-person meetings or written correspondences.

a. Step 1: Mission Analysis.

Mission analysis ensures a shared civilian-military understanding of policy and strategic objectives, end-states, planning assumptions, the strategic and operating environments, tasks, operational approach, and what constitutes mission success. The Secretary of Defense, through the USD(P), validates key mission analysis outputs, directs development of additional options, and provides planning guidance early in plan development. Mission analysis will consider:

- (1) Proposed mission.
- (2) Problems to be solved and threat characterization, including anticipated courses of action (COAs).
- (3) Security environment description, including facts and assumptions.
- (4) Potential operational approaches and initial commander's intent.
- (5) Clarification of end-states and what constitutes mission success.

b. Step 2: Concept Approval.

- (1) Concept approval provides for shared civilian and military leadership agreement on the proposed COA, tasks, timelines, required forces, decision-points, and risk.

- (2) The Secretary of Defense:
 - (a) Validates that the COA and the COA's underlying assumptions:
 - 1. Adhere to policy guidance.
 - 2. Are based on reasonable assumptions.
 - 3. If successfully executed, address the strategic problem and achieve directed end-states.
 - (b) Acknowledges that the validated COAs have acceptable risk levels.
 - (c) Provides additional guidance as necessary.
- (3) Concept approval will consider:
 - (a) Description of COAs considered.
 - (b) Proposed concept of operations.
 - (c) Decision points required for the Secretary of Defense and the President to execute the plan.
 - (d) Initial assessment of the sufficiency of active and reserve forces, logistics, and transportation required to execute the proposed concept of operations.
 - (e) The risk level associated with the approved COAs.
 - (f) Force requirements that exceed or adhere to force apportionment guidance.

c. Step 3: Plan Approval.

Plan approval provides for a shared civilian-military agreement that the plan is strategically feasible and sufficiently executable, acceptable, and complete to prepare DoD to generate military options and respond to designated crises effectively and efficiently. The USD(P) will either recommend that the Secretary of Defense approve the plan without changes, recommend that the Secretary of Defense approve the plan conditional on specified changes being made, or recommend that additional planning guidance be incorporated into the plan before it will be reconsidered for approval. Plan approval will consider:

- (1) Risks and risk mitigation measures.
- (2) Escalation management.
- (3) Readiness to execute.
- (4) Transportation, logistics, and sourcing feasibility, including when operating under adversarial conditions.

(5) Plan execution steps and Secretary of Defense and President decision points.

(6) Plan relationship, integration, and trade-offs with related contingency plans to identify cross-CCMD gaps and seams and potential risk trade-offs.

(7) CJCS and CCDR military advice.

3.3. MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD (MFR).

In coordination with the Joint Staff J5 and key review participants, the DASD(P&P) will prepare an MFR documenting plan reviews with the Secretary of Defense. The MFR will document the attendees list, discussion summary, and decisions (e.g., additional planning guidance, next steps in the plan review process, tasks, and approval decisions). The Secretary of Defense or the USD(P) will sign the MFR.

a. Tasking decisions during plan reviews will be limited to actions necessary to complete the planning process.

b. During MFR coordination, tasked organizations will review assigned tasks for accuracy and the ability to implement.

c. The USD(P), through the DASD(P&P), will monitor and oversee implementation of plan review decisions and keep the Secretary of Defense and plan review participants informed of implementation progress.

3.4. CCDR CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY CONSIDERATIONS.

During plan reviews, CCDRs will limit discussions to existing capabilities and capacity in the joint force, but may highlight risk posed by capability constraints.

3.5. PLANNING GUIDANCE FLEXIBILITY.

a. CCDRs may request additional planning guidance at any time in the planning process. They should submit requests in writing to the Joint Staff J5 and the DASD(P&P), to be routed through the USD(P) to the Secretary of Defense.

b. In accordance with planning and policy guidance, the CJCS may provide additional planning guidance at any time during the plan review process, keeping the Secretary of Defense and the USD(P) informed.

SECTION 4: GIF REVIEWS

4.1. GENERAL.

a. GIFs are strategic frameworks that enable the Secretary of Defense to make comprehensive decisions, informed by CJCS advice, and integrate global joint force activities during crisis or conflict to address a priority challenge. The Joint Staff develops GIFs based on CJCS direction and in accordance with CPG and/or GEF planning guidance. GIFs are produced based on the CJCS-led reviews of the priority challenges identified in the NDS. GIFs provide a global perspective on contingency response and identify potential President or Secretary of Defense decisions required during a crisis or contingency.

b. GIF reviews provide a shared civilian-military understanding of potential global resource constraints, risks, trade-offs, and opportunity costs in and across campaigns if a crisis or contingency occurs. The Secretary of Defense directs the OSD GIF review process through the USD(P) and is the GIF approval authority.

4.2. ROLES.

In coordination with the Joint Staff J5, the DASD(P&P) recommends a 12-month schedule to the USD(P) for review and approval of GIFs. The USD(P) will review the GIFs in coordination with appropriate OSD Components and forward them to the Secretary of Defense for review and final approval as appropriate.

4.3. PROCESS.

The Secretary of Defense directs the GIF review process and is the GIF approval authority. Secretary of Defense framework reviews will be preceded by reviews at the DASD(P&P)- and the USD(P)-level. The USD(P) will recommend either that the Secretary of Defense approve the framework without changes; that the Secretary of Defense approve the framework conditional on specified changes being made; or that additional planning guidance be incorporated before reconsidering it for approval. GIF approval reviews will include:

a. Proposed framework to integrate joint force global actions, including facts, assumptions, approach, and policy end-states.

b. Potential Presidential or Secretary of Defense-level decisions associated with the global response to a priority challenge.

c. Global options to manage crisis or conflict escalation, de-escalation, and associated risks with the global response to a priority challenge.

d. Identification and provision of military advice on options and recommendations to address friction and risk in resources, readiness, and capabilities across competition and contingency requirements.

4.4. MFRS.

a. In coordination with the Joint Staff J5 and key review participants, the DASD(P&P) will prepare an MFR documenting framework reviews with the Secretary of Defense. The MFR will document the attendees list, discussion summary, and decisions (e.g., additional planning guidance, next steps in the GIF review process, tasks, and approval decisions). The Secretary of Defense or the USD(P) will sign the MFR.

b. During MFR coordination, tasked organizations will review assigned tasks for accuracy and ability to implement.

c. The USD(P), through the DASD(P&P), will monitor and oversee implementation of GIF review decisions and keep the Secretary of Defense informed on implementation progress.

SECTION 5: GCP REVIEWS

5.1. GENERAL.

a. GCPs organize and integrate joint force planning to address NDS priority challenges. The Joint Staff develops GCPs to integrate planning globally across the joint force to identify priorities, resources, and risks for the Secretary of Defense. GCPs are regularly reviewed to assess trends in the strategic environment and inform reprioritization of GCP objectives.

b. GCP reviews update GCP implementation efforts, ongoing planning, annual assessments, and the way forward. Key to these reviews are the annual CCMD GCP assessments that identify changes in the strategic environment and current operational effectiveness. GCP reviews will inform the annual global force management process.

5.2. ROLES.

a. The USD(P) oversees the GCP review process and determines the number, timing, and agenda of plan reviews and whether they will take place as in-person briefings or video conferences, or through written correspondence. In coordination with other OSD Component heads, the USD(P) will recommend either that the Secretary of Defense approve the plan without changes; that the Secretary of Defense approve the plan conditional on specified changes being made; or that additional planning guidance be incorporated before reconsidering it for approval.

b. The CJCS manages GCPs on behalf of the Secretary of Defense, who is the GCP approval authority.

5.3. PROCESS.

a. The Secretary of Defense directs the GCP review and approval process and determines the number, timing, and agenda of plan reviews and whether they will take place as in-person briefings or video conferences or through written correspondence. Secretary of Defense plan reviews will be preceded by DASD(P&P)- and USD(P)-level plan reviews.

b. The Secretary of Defense will review GCPs annually, with sufficient time for the review of findings to inform the USD(P)'s development of strategic implementation planning for global competition and Joint Staff development of the annual Global Force Management Allocation Plan. Any GCP updates, refinements, or rewrites will address the Secretary of Defense's feedback and guidance.

c. GCP reviews will typically include:

(1) The effectiveness of GCP implementation in achieving campaign objectives and an assessment of the strategic risks and opportunities.

(2) Campaign support to contingency preparedness and transition.

- (3) Recommended strategic prioritization.
 - (4) Changes to the GCP and related campaign plans as required.
 - (5) The GCPs' viability in the current strategic environment.
- d. The USD(P) will assess the GCPs. This assessment will include:
- (1) A consideration of the DoD's priority ally and partner roles, engagements, and activities.
 - (2) Other security cooperation efforts in the GCP timeframe.
 - (3) Capability and force development priorities for key partner and allied armed forces relevant to the competition space.

5.4. MFRS.

- a. In coordination with the Joint Staff J5 and key review participants, the DASD(P&P) will prepare an MFR for signature by the Secretary of Defense or the USD(P). GCP review MFRs will document the list of review attendees, discussion summary, Secretary of Defense guidance and tasks, and Secretary of Defense GCP endorsement.
- b. During MFR coordination, tasked organizations will review assigned tasks for accuracy and ability to implement. A tasked organization coordination on the MFR constitutes task acceptance.
- c. The USD(P), through the DASD(P&P), will monitor and oversee implementation of the GCP review decisions and keep the Secretary of Defense informed on implementation progress.

GLOSSARY

G.1. ACRONYMS.

ACRONYM	MEANING
ASD(SPC)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities
CCDR	Combatant Commander
CCMD	Combatant Command
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CPG	Contingency Planning Guidance
COA	course of action
DASD(P&P)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans and Posture
GCP	global campaign plan
GEF	Guidance for Employment of the Force
GIF	global integration framework
J5	Joint Staff Strategy, Plans, and Policy Directorate
MFR	memorandum for the record
NDS	national defense strategy
U.S.C.	United States Code
USD(P)	Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

G.2. DEFINITIONS.

These terms and their definitions are for the purpose of this issuance.

TERM	DEFINITION
campaign plan	A joint operation plan for a series of related operations aimed at achieving strategic or operational objectives in a given time and space.
contingency plan	A branch of a campaign plan that is planned based on hypothetical situations for designated threats, catastrophic events, and contingent missions outside of crisis conditions.

REFERENCES

- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, “Contingency Planning Guidance,” January 18, 2019¹
- Department of Defense, “The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America,” January 19, 2018²
- DoD Directive 5111.01, “Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)),” June 23, 2020
- United States Code, Title 10

¹ Document is classified with limited distribution. Questions regarding this reference should be directed in writing to the OUSD(P) Issuances Team at osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.issuances-team@mail.mil.

² Document is classified with limited distribution. A summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy is available at: <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>. Questions regarding this reference should be directed in writing to the OUSD(P) Issuances Team at osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.issuances-team@mail.mil.