



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

MAR - 6 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Majority Leader:

I am responding on behalf of Secretary Mattis to your January 9, 2018, letter. I appreciate the important matters that you have raised and have considered them carefully. Secretary Mattis remains committed to full transparency by providing you and the Minority Leader access to all the information you need in order to carry out your Constitutional responsibilities. As our staff told your Chief of Staff via phone, the Department will provide you with the requested Special Access Program (SAP) briefing at your earliest convenience.

Access to Department of Defense (DoD) SAP information by Congressional staff, particularly the very limited number with pre-approved "blanket" access, is based on a long-standing agreement between the Department and the Congressional committees of jurisdiction. This agreement has served our mutual interest of maintaining the security of our most sensitive programs since 1999. Last year the Department added a new mechanism to the underlying agreement to allow your National Security Advisor access to DoD SAP programs on a limited basis in coordination with our oversight committees. We believe this new mechanism helps our oversight committees keep Congressional leadership informed on critical issues. We stand ready to discuss any shortcomings in this process with your staff and our relevant oversight committees.

The Department is also conducting a comprehensive review of existing SAP accesses and process, with a focus on broad or all-SAP access. Consistent with Secretary Mattis' direction to increase our emphasis on protecting our Nation's most sensitive capabilities, this review will likely result in even further reductions to the already very limited number of individuals with pre-approved "blanket" access to all DoD SAP Programs. It is important to note that our most recent review already resulted in an almost one-third reduction of DoD users with the highest level of access. However, we did not remove any legislative branch users, and we are not contemplating any reduction in the current SAP access by Members of Congress and Congressional staff.

Thank you for your continued support of our Nation's military. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff.

Patricia M. Shanoh

