

**TITLE 10 - ARMED FORCES**

**Subtitle A - General Military Law**

**PART I - ORGANIZATION AND GENERAL MILITARY POWERS**

**CHAPTER 6 - COMBATANT COMMANDS**

**§ 164. Commanders of combatant commands: assignment; powers and duties**

**(a) Assignment as Combatant Commander.—**

(1) The President may assign an officer to serve as the commander of a unified or specified combatant command only if the officer—

(A) has the joint specialty under section 661 of this title; and

(B) has completed a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment (as defined in section 664 (f) of this title) as a general or flag officer.

(2) The President may waive paragraph (1) in the case of an officer if the President determines that such action is necessary in the national interest.

**(b) Responsibilities of Combatant Commanders.—**

(1) The commander of a combatant command is responsible to the President and to the Secretary of Defense for the performance of missions assigned to that command by the President or by the Secretary with the approval of the President.

(2) Subject to the direction of the President, the commander of a combatant command—

(A) performs his duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense; and

(B) is directly responsible to the Secretary for the preparedness of the command to carry out missions assigned to the command.

**(c) Command Authority of Combatant Commanders.—**

(1) Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense, the authority, direction, and control of the commander of a combatant command with respect to the commands and forces assigned to that command include the command functions of—

(A) giving authoritative direction to subordinate commands and forces necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command, including authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics;

(B) prescribing the chain of command to the commands and forces within the command;

(C) organizing commands and forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command;

(D) employing forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command;

(E) assigning command functions to subordinate commanders;

(F) coordinating and approving those aspects of administration and support (including control of resources and equipment, internal organization, and training) and discipline necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command; and

(G) exercising the authority with respect to selecting subordinate commanders, selecting combatant command staff, suspending subordinates, and convening courts-martial, as provided in subsections (e), (f), and (g) of this section and section 822 (a) of this title, respectively.

(2) (A) The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that a commander of a combatant command has sufficient authority, direction, and control over the commands and forces assigned to the command to exercise effective command over those commands and forces. In carrying out this subparagraph, the Secretary shall consult with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

- (B) The Secretary shall periodically review and, after consultation with the Secretaries of the military departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commander of the combatant command, assign authority to the commander of the combatant command for those aspects of administration and support that the Secretary considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command.
- (3) If a commander of a combatant command at any time considers his authority, direction, or control with respect to any of the commands or forces assigned to the command to be insufficient to command effectively, the commander shall promptly inform the Secretary of Defense.
- (d) **Authority Over Subordinate Commanders.**— Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense—
- (1) commanders of commands and forces assigned to a combatant command are under the authority, direction, and control of, and are responsible to, the commander of the combatant command on all matters for which the commander of the combatant command has been assigned authority under subsection (c);
- (2) the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) shall communicate with other elements of the Department of Defense on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has been assigned authority under subsection (c) in accordance with procedures, if any, established by the commander of the combatant command;
- (3) other elements of the Department of Defense shall communicate with the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has been assigned authority under subsection (c) in accordance with procedures, if any, established by the commander of the combatant command; and
- (4) if directed by the commander of the combatant command, the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) shall advise the commander of the combatant command of all communications to and from other elements of the Department of Defense on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has not been assigned authority under subsection (c).
- (e) **Selection of Subordinate Commanders.**—
- (1) An officer may be assigned to a position as the commander of a command directly subordinate to the commander of a combatant command or, in the case of such a position that is designated under section 601 of this title as a position of importance and responsibility, may be recommended to the President for assignment to that position, only—
- (A) with the concurrence of the commander of the combatant command; and
- (B) in accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense.
- (2) The Secretary of Defense may waive the requirement under paragraph (1) for the concurrence of the commander of a combatant command with regard to the assignment (or recommendation for assignment) of a particular officer if the Secretary of Defense determines that such action is in the national interest.
- (3) The commander of a combatant command shall—
- (A) evaluate the duty performance of each commander of a command directly subordinate to the commander of such combatant command; and
- (B) submit the evaluation to the Secretary of the military department concerned and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- (4) At least one deputy commander of the combatant command the geographic area of responsibility of which includes the United States shall be a qualified officer of the National Guard who is eligible for promotion to the grade of O-9, unless a National Guard officer is serving as commander of that combatant command.
- (f) **Combatant Command Staff.**—
- (1) Each unified and specified combatant command shall have a staff to assist the commander of the command in carrying out his responsibilities. Positions of responsibility on the combatant

NB: This unofficial compilation of the U.S. Code is current as of Jan. 5, 2009 (see <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/uscprint.html>).

command staff shall be filled by officers from each of the armed forces having significant forces assigned to the command.

(2) An officer may be assigned to a position on the staff of a combatant command or, in the case of such a position that is designated under section 601 of this title as a position of importance and responsibility, may be recommended to the President for assignment to that position, only—

(A) with the concurrence of the commander of such command; and

(B) in accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense.

(3) The Secretary of Defense may waive the requirement under paragraph (2) for the concurrence of the commander of a combatant command with regard to the assignment (or recommendation for assignment) of a particular officer to serve on the staff of the combatant command if the Secretary of Defense determines that such action is in the national interest.

(g) **Authority to Suspend Subordinates.**— In accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense, the commander of a combatant command may suspend from duty and recommend the reassignment of any officer assigned to such combatant command.

(Added Pub. L. 99–433, title II, § 211(a), Oct. 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 1013; amended Pub. L. 100–456, div. A, title V, § 519(a)(2), Sept. 29, 1988, 102 Stat. 1972; Pub. L. 110–181, div. A, title XVIII, § 1824(b), Jan. 28, 2008, 122 Stat. 501.)

## Amendments

2008—Subsec. (e)(4). Pub. L. 110–181 added par. (4).

1988—Subsec. (a)(1)(B). Pub. L. 100–456 substituted “completed a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment (as defined in section 664 (f) of this title)” for “served in at least one joint duty assignment (as defined under section 668 (b) of this title)”.

## Effective Date

Section 214(c) of Pub. L. 99–433 provided that: “Subsections (e), (f), and (g) of section 164 of title 10, United States Code (as added by section 211 of this Act), shall take effect at the end of the 90-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act [Oct. 1, 1986], or on such earlier date as may be prescribed by the Secretary of Defense.”

## Sense of Congress

Pub. L. 110–181, div. A, title XVIII, § 1824(a), Jan. 28, 2008, 122 Stat. 501, provided that: “It is the sense of Congress that, whenever officers of the Armed Forces are considered for promotion to the grade of lieutenant general, or vice admiral in the case of the Navy, on the active duty list, officers in the reserve components of the Armed Forces who are eligible for promotion to such grade should be considered for promotion to such grade.”

## Waiver of Qualifications for Assignment as Combatant Commander

Section 214(b) of Pub. L. 99–433 authorized President, until Oct. 1, 1990, to waive, on a case-by-case basis, certain requirements provided for in subsec. (a) of this section relating to assignment of commanders of combatant commands.