



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1000

AUG 29 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
DEPUTY CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER
CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR OF COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM
EVALUATION
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR LEGISLATIVE
AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC
AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR OF NET ASSESSMENT
DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES OFFICE
DIRECTORS OF DEFENSE AGENCIES
DIRECTORS OF DOD FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: Guidance on Secretary of Defense Read-Aheads

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance for the preparation of Secretary of Defense (SD) read-ahead materials in order to provide the SD with the information he needs to prepare for events. Read-ahead material for the Deputy Secretary of Defense (DSD) will follow the same format but is managed separately by the DSD office.

Components designated as the Office of Primary Responsibility will provide SD read-ahead materials to the Executive Secretary by noon two working days prior to the event for all events the SD is scheduled to attend. Exceptions to this timeline will be addressed by the Executive Secretary. Component principal or senior official will review and initial all read-aheads before submission.

Detailed guidance and associated templates are attached. My points of contact (POCs) for this guidance are Ms. Belinda Purifoy, at (703) 692-7120/7122 or belinda.purifoy@sd.mil or my Military Assistants, at (703) 692-7125 or execsecma2@sd.mil. POCs for questions relating to DSD read-aheads are the DSD Military Assistants, at (703) 692-7150 or depsecdefsama@sd.mil.

Hallock N. Mohler, Jr.
CAPT, USN
Executive Secretary

Attachments:
As stated



OSD010486-17/CMD014094-17

**General Guidance about Read Ahead Packages
for the
Secretary of Defense**

1. Components will deliver an original read-ahead plus nine (9) copies of SD read-aheads using the attached guidelines and templates to Ms. Belinda Purifoy in room 3E880. Components will email DSD read-ahead material to DepSecDefSAMA@sd.mil in lieu of hard copies.
2. Deadline for read-aheads is 1200 two working days prior to a scheduled event unless specified earlier. For example, if the prep session for a visit is at 1400 on Wednesday, the read-ahead is due at 1200 on Monday. If a meeting is at 1000 Monday, the read-ahead is due at 1200 on Thursday the week prior.
3. Components must notify the Executive Secretary at (703)692-7121 if they anticipate submitting a read-ahead late.
4. Primary offices are responsible for coordinating with secondary offices and consolidating material into a single product to avoid unnecessary duplication. Primary offices will **complete all coordination before submitting** the read-ahead.
5. Component principal or senior official must review, approve and initial all read-ahead packages before submission.
6. For some meetings, the Secretary's office may host a preparatory coordination meeting to ensure the agenda and materials meet the objectives. In that case, read-ahead packages will be due 48 hours prior to the prep session.
7. When preparing classified documents, refer to DoD 5200.1-PH, the DoD Guide to marking classified documents. Classified read-aheads must contain appropriate portion markings.
8. The point of contact regarding questions about specific topics or required coordination is Ms. Belinda Purifoy at 703-692-7120/7122, or one of the Executive Secretariat Military Assistants at (703) 692-7125.

**Guidelines for Preparing Read-Ahead Packages
for the
Secretary of Defense**

1. Habits:

- a. Take mental responsibility for the outcome associated with the read ahead. This is the essence of preparing a read ahead, and it's the only way to anticipate the information the Secretary needs. In that regard, the ultimate triumph is to answer the Secretary's questions before he asks them.
- b. Help the Secretary think and lead. Helping the boss requires thinking like the boss – giving him the information he needs to make decisions and persuade others.
- c. Preparing the read ahead is not the main job. The main job is information-gathering: collecting and verifying facts from the right sources; organizing information ahead of time; and conveying essential elements.
- d. Elevate the discussion. Unless information is immediately intuitive (e.g. there's been an earthquake in San Francisco), present information within its larger context, giving the Secretary a sense of relative importance and relevance to the situation.
- e. Put the bottom line up front. Don't bury the lead under non-essential information. This single habit may be the most difficult to master; deriving the "BLUF" from a complicated set of facts takes forethought and an appreciation for the strategic situation.
- f. Control the pace of information. As much as possible, clarify the big ideas, separate them into discrete thoughts, and present them in logical order.
- g. Be precise and don't overreach. Don't make a grab for insight; just state the obvious. Every sentence in a read ahead should either state a fact, provide context about the fact, or characterize the fact.
- h. In a broader sense, write such that you cannot be misunderstood. Convey the intended ideas, and none more; your primary writing task is to keep words out of a read ahead, not put them in.
- i. Learn what the Secretary needs by observing how the Secretary thinks, communicates, and consumes information.

2. Style:

- a. Use plain english, minimizing jargon and the use of acronyms;
- b. Avoid redundancy;
- c. Bold or underline key words and use bold subject headers;
- d. Highlight important points in yellow (digitally when possible);
- e. Use bullets in the body of the read ahead. With some exceptions, do not exceed three lines per bullet.

3. Standard Format (See attached template Page 5.):

- a. The name of the action officer/subject matter expert will appear in the upper right hand corner. (Example: Prepared By: Colonel Heather Carlisle, USA; Executive Secretariat; (703) 692-7125.)
- b. **Read Ahead / Background:** should be the first item in the package and the background should be limited to no more than two (2) pages.
- c. **Talking / Discussion Points:** should be the second item in the package and limited to 3-4 bullets.

- d. **Minimize the number of attachments:** only include documents that will be presented or referenced during the meeting.
- e. Double-sided for all documents over 1 page.
- f. 1-inch left/right margins, 1-inch top and bottom margins.
- g. Font should be 14-point, Times New Roman.
- h. Double space between items, single space between bullets.
- i. **Include page numbers on all documents longer than one page, and print double-sided.**
- j. Do not use room numbers, rather use:
 - i. SecDef Conference Room (for 3E863)
 - ii. DepSecDef Conference Room (for 3E928)
- k. Use appropriately sized paperclips to fasten packages.
- l. Use full names, not initials.
- m. For revised read-ahead packages, note in subject line or background paragraph that the submission is a revision. Underline and bold the edited material using blue font to differentiate it from the other material that which has been highlighted.
- n. **Revisions are highly discouraged and are only made if there is a substantive change approved by your Principal.**

4. Principal/National Security Council Read-Ahead Format (See attached template Page 6):

- a. Top page in packet is the Policy read-ahead.
- b. Meeting Purpose (limit to 1-2 pages): State clearly whether this is a decision meeting, an info update, a request for recommendations and outline expectations for DoD and SD participation (will SD be asked to provide a briefing? Are there particular agenda items where his views will be sought?)
- c. Background: Organized by Agenda Items.
- d. Be sure to describe the meeting roadmap (i.e., State will brief topic x, DoD will respond)
- e. Include bureaucratic state of play – where do agency principals stand on the topics being discussed?
- f. Talking Points (limit to 2-3 pages): On a separate page, organize talking points by agenda item.
- g. **Include page numbers on all documents longer than one page, and print double-sided.**

5. Talking/Discussion Points Format (See attached template Page 7.):

- a. Should be the second item in the package (limited to one (1) page) with no more than 3-4 bullets.
- b. These points should be short and clear statements of major issues or points to be covered in the meeting. They should:
 - i. Avoid pleasantries or fillers.
 - ii. Focus on achieving the objectives of the meeting.
 - iii. If an **internal meeting**, these **discussion points** should:
 - 1. Serve as guidelines for the discussion.
 - 2. Highlight any decisions the Secretary may be asked to make.
 - iv. If an **external meeting**, these **talking points** should:
 - 1. Provide the Secretary with crisp language to achieve the objectives/deliverables of the meeting.

2. Be crafted to ensure a logical flow to the conversation. Card needs to flow the way you imagine the conversation should go.

- c. **Include page numbers on all documents longer than one page, and print double-sided.**
- d. 1-inch left/right margins, 1-inch top and bottom margins.
- e. Font should be 14 point, Times New Roman in all caps.
- f. **Provide a notecard** (See attached template Page 9.) with topline talking points/memory joggers for ALL meetings with non-DoD personnel (foreign counterparts, Cabinet Secretaries, associations, etc.)

6. **Phone Call Talking Points Format** (See attached template Page 8.):

- a. **Background:** [14-point font] In italics, briefly state who requested call; when the two last spoke; and latest state of play on issue to be discussed.
- b. **Talking Points:** Bullet style.
- c. 1-inch left/right margins, 1-inch top and bottom margins.
- d. Font should be 14-point, Times New Roman.
- e. Double space between items, single space between bullets.
- f. **Include page numbers on all documents longer than one page, and print double-sided.**
- g. Read-ahead should not be more than one page. If a second page is needed, keep all talking points together on the subsequent page

7. **Foreign Visitors:**

- a. Ensure to address:
 - i. Precisely what they are doing with respect to the Secretary's/Deputy's priorities (for example; prevailing in current conflicts, preventing proliferation, preparing for and countering future challenges and threats, preserving the finest fighting force and core national security capabilities within current budget environment);
 - ii. Anything else they are doing to support U.S. security objectives
 - iii. Basic defense relationship and country information, as relevant.

Prepared By: CDR Doug Graber, USN;
Executive Secretariat; (703) 692-7130

--SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR STANDARD READ-AHEADS--
READ-AHEAD FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
Name of Person/Group he is meeting with (Pronunciation, if needed)
Month xx, 2017, time xxxx-xxxx, Room #

From: Under Secretary xxx

Meeting Purpose: A one-to-three sentence executive summary of the topic, the reason that the event is taking place (i.e., was it the SD's request, self-invite by foreign official, follow on to prior meeting, etc), and the SD's role (e.g., receive an update, give guidance, make decision, prep for a future event, etc.)

Objectives: One-to-three bullets that highlight what SD should get from the meeting.

Attendees: List

Background: [No more than 2 pages, and print double-sided]

- In several bullets, provide detail on key issues and additional information relevant to this meeting.
- Explain the choreography of the meeting, including speaking roles/order, timing of expected SD speaking role, whom the SD should turn to for additional information, etc.
- Ensure you describe the bureaucratic state of play, (e.g., AT&L and Joint Staff disagree over proposal x; Cabinet Secretary x will ask you to fund project x).

Attachments: Make Talking Points Tab A (If required)

MINIMIZE supporting attachments. Provide only documents that are essential to the meeting (e.g., an MOU to be signed, a letter or memo that initiated this meeting, etc). Do not include intelligence assessments, or other background materials.

Do include:

1. Biography(s)
2. Coordination: Ensure relevant coordination is completed prior to submission and indicated in attachment.

--SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR PC/NSC READ-AHEADS--

Meeting Purpose

- State clearly whether this is a decision meeting, an info update, a request for recommendations, and outline expectations for DoD and SD participation (will SD be asked to provide a briefing? Are there particular agenda items where his views will be sought?)

DoD Objectives

Background Organized by Agenda Items

- Be sure to describe the meeting roadmap (i.e., State will brief topic x, DoD will respond).
 - Include bureaucratic state of play – where do agency principals stand on the topics being discussed?
-

Talking Points

- On a separate page (Tab A), organize talking points by agenda item.
-

Attachments: Include the National Security Strategy paper for the meeting and any DoD papers/charts submitted for the meeting. Do not include intelligence reports or additional background documents. Aim to have no more than 3 tabs.

--SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR TALKING/DISCUSSION POINTS--
TALKING/DISCUSSION POINTS

- Should be the second item in the package (limited to one (1) page).
- These points should be short, containing no more than 3-4 bullets that are clear statements of major issues or points to be covered in the meeting. They should:
 - Avoid pleasantries or fillers.
 - Focus on achieving the objectives of the meeting.
- If an **internal meeting**, these **discussion points** should:
 - Serve as guidelines for the discussion.
 - Highlight any decisions the SD may be asked to make.
- If an **external meeting**, these **talking points** should:
 - Provide the SD with crisp language to achieve the objectives/deliverables of the meeting.
 - Be crafted to ensure a logical flow to the conversation.
- **Paginate all documents longer than one page, and print double-sided.**
- 1-inch left/right margins, 1-inch top and bottom margins.
- **Font should be 14 point, Times New Roman.**
- Provide a note card (see template attached) with topline talking points/memory joggers for ALL meetings with non-DoD personnel (foreign counterparts, Cabinet Secretaries, Members of Congress, associations, etc). Notecards with topline talking points/memory joggers for meetings with DoD personnel will be provided when requested based on the specific circumstances of the meeting.

--SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR PHONE CALL TALKING POINTS--
**TALKING POINTS FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CALL WITH
TITLE, NAME (Pronunciation, if needed)
Date, time**

Background: [14-point font] *In italics, briefly state who requested call; when the two last spoke; purpose of call; latest state of play on issue to be discussed*

Talking Points: [14-point font]

- Talking points should be bulleted

Read-ahead should not be more than 1 page. If a second page is needed, keep all talking points together on second page. **Insert page numbers on all documents longer than one page and print double-sided.**

Sample Template for Note Card
(XX July 2017)

Discussion Items

- Provide topline talking points/memory joggers for ALL meetings with non-DoD personnel (foreign counterparts, Cabinet Secretaries, associations, etc).
- Include classification at the top and bottom center, the non-DoD personnel name and phonetic pronunciation (specifically foreign counterparts).
- 3-4 main key talking points (full sentences not necessary, just bullets with key phrases).
- Print using 3.88 Envelope Monarch page setup with hard stock cards available from OSD Graphics.
- Microsoft Word settings for the note card:
 - Set font to Calibri (body), 12-point;
 - Adjust size to envelope Monarch (3.88 x 7.5);
 - Margins (top - .22, bottom - .19, left - .31, and right - .3).
 - In addition, use 9-point font spacing between subjects if space needed.