

## Defense

[Pam Turner](#)

### Campaign Discussion

Throughout his campaign, President-Elect Donald Trump made frequent reference to defense-related issues. His comments focused on four general areas: building up our military resources, defeating ISIS, insisting that our allies assume a larger share of their security costs, and diplomatic efforts to work with our adversaries while at the same time relying on the leverage of our military advantage.

### Key Players

**Administration:** Retired General James Mattis  
*Secretary of Defense*

#### Senate

Committee on Armed Services

*John McCain (R-AZ)*  
*Chairman*

*Jack Reed (D-RI)*  
*Ranking Member*

#### House

Committee on Armed Services

*Mac Thornberry (R-TX)*  
*Chairman*

*Adam Smith (D-WA)*  
*Ranking Member*

With his selection of retired General James Mattis to serve as Secretary of Defense, Trump will bring to the Department the national security expertise of a decorated battlefield commander as well as someone familiar with building strategic alliances with our allies. Mattis will need a special waiver from Congress to serve as Secretary since he has not been retired from the military for seven years, but at this point it appears that he will be easily confirmed.

Earlier this year, Trump suggested he would ask military leaders to give him a plan in 30 days for defeating ISIS. This should include military, cyber, economic and diplomatic strategies. He wants to eliminate the defense sequester and will present a budget to increase manpower for the Army and Marine Corps, build a 350 ship Navy, increase fighter aircraft, and modernize our ballistic missile defense system. Trump has been consulting with various military officials and his own advisory teams in assessing the current situation to determine how best to satisfy these goals and there will be further discussions and specific recommendations for budget requests, acquisition reform and readiness requirements. Some uncertainties remain with respect to some of the more expensive weapons systems and current spending priorities. Also, the DOD Advisory Panel on Streamlining and Codifying Acquisition Regulations is not due to issue their report until 2018.

Some issues which have yet to be addressed in detail include the use of autonomous weaponized systems (drones) and other artificial intelligence tools as well as the question of how to deal with base closures and privatization efforts. Also, it is not clear how he will address the Authorized Use of Military Force, and issues related to military use of cyber weapons.

## Congress

While many in Congress will welcome the opportunity to increase military resources, the issue is not without controversy in terms of military strategy overall, but also in the budget context where there are objections to defense increases without similar domestic spending changes. Defense spending will clearly be one of the early and more difficult issues in the new Congress. The question of potential departmental reorganization and changes in cyber responsibilities could also raise concerns.

### House Issues

HASC will focus on a range of issues related to defense spending and potential reorganization:

- Acquisition reform including backlog and cost overruns
- Ability to handle commercial purchases including preparing requirements list
- General program management
- The fight against Islamic terrorism
- Oversight of various DOD components, program management

### Senate Issues

Like their House counterparts, the SASC agenda will include:

- DOD program and systems oversight, including management, budget and manpower resources
- Military strategy with regard to ISIS
- Acquisition policy reform
- Cyber threat, including the need for a national response policy to respond to a “new kind of warfare”. Big interest of Chairman McCain, and he has suggested that the Senate create a Select Committee on Cyber
- Encryption
- Status of the nuclear triad

Additionally, the Senate Armed Services Committee will, in early January, be considering the nomination of General Mattis to serve as Secretary of Defense. As issues become more defined, budgets are submitted, and further discussion of our military objectives continues, defense will remain a central focus of the new Administration.