

Four Defense Leaders Answer Questions in Pentagon Forum

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 18, 2002—Four of the Defense Department's top leaders took to the microphone today to explain to a Pentagon audience exactly what they do.

The Under Secretaries of Defense each spoke briefly and answered questions from Pentagon employees. Edward C. "Pete" Aldridge, Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, said a priority of his was to get away from using the term "acquisition reform."

"I didn't really like that word, 'reform,'" he said. "It sounded like I'd done something bad and I must repent, or I'd been to reform school." Instead, Aldridge said, he's pushed the men and women in his Department to focus on acquisition excellence—"doing things right, doing them quickly, doing them with skill and precision."

Under Secretary for Policy Douglas Feith spoke to the group on how the Defense Department is working through historic times. "History doesn't hand out great, terrible, or important events evenly over the years. There are times when world affairs are fairly steady, when America's relationships are stable and proceeding predictably down a fixed track," he said. "And then there are times like ours."

Feith said the world and America's place in it have been in flux since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. He explained the policy section tries to make sense of unexpected events and shape DoD's reactions and responses to those events.

He described the policy section as hundreds of thoughtful men and women who are "frequently accused of being brainy." He said these men and women work "extraordinary hours ... with short deadlines and high demands."

Still, he said, they're motivated and "fired up by the knowledge that their work, when it's smart enough

and creative, and timely enough, has a good chance of becoming U.S. policy."

Dov Zakheim, DoD Comptroller and Chief Financial Officer, told the group that the money in the Defense Department budget is taxpayers' money "and we take that very seriously." He described his team's job as "trying to get the right money into the right hands."

Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness David S.C. Chu, described his team as "the people people." He said the value of DoD personnel was apparent at the Pentagon on Sept. 12, 2001, "when the work force marched back in ... when the building was still literally on fire."

He said it's also been apparent in "the intrepid action of our forces in Afghanistan" and in the positive response of thousands of Reserve Component troops who responded to call-ups after Sept. 11 without a complaint.

"They have met that call with great spirit," Chu said of the Reserve Component forces.

Questions from the audience ranged in topic from integration of reserve forces to abuses of the government travel card program. Other topics included the aging federal civilian work force and the role of the Defense Policy Board.

Ken Krieg, Special Assistant to the Defense Secretary, wrapped the forum up by lauding the work the men and women of the Defense Department have accomplished over the past year.

"Thanks for what you do to help defend America and its interests," he said. "Have a safe and happy holiday season."

Editor's Note: This information is in the public domain at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news>.