

s 22 1(a)(ii)

Title: United States: Defense Secretary Hagel orders reviews of security
MRN: s 22 1(a)(ii) 18/09/2013 05:15:33 PM EDT
To: Canberra
Cc: RR : Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York CG
From: Washington
From File:
References: The cable has the following attachment/s -
130918 - Hagel Dempsey Press Briefing Transcript.docx
Response: Routine, Information Only

UNCLASSIFIED

s 22 1(a)(ii)

Summary

In response to recent security incidents, US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel today announced that he has directed two large scale department-wide reviews to take place in order to assess the Defense Department's physical security and access procedures; and the practices for granting and renewing security clearances.

In a press conference with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dempsey today, 18 September, US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced that he has directed Deputy Secretary Ash Carter to lead two large scale department-wide security reviews. The first will be a review of physical security and access procedures at all US Defense facilities worldwide. The second will be a review of Defense's procedures for granting and renewing security clearances.

2. Separately, Secretary Hagel also directed the establishment of an independent panel that will conduct its own assessment of security and clearance procedures. The panel will work alongside Deputy Secretary Carter's reviews and will report directly to Secretary Hagel.
3. While today's announcement comes in the immediate aftermath of Monday's mass shooting at Washington Navy Yard, it should also be seen in the context of the 2009 Fort Hood shooting and the Snowden and Manning security breaches.
4. The US Navy is completing a separate review of the Washington Navy Yard incident and its results will also feed into the broader departmental reviews.
5. A full transcript of the press briefing is attached.

text ends

s 22 1(a)(ii)

s 22 1(a)(ii)

REDACTED

Defense Department Briefing

**Briefers: Secretary of Defense Charles Hagel; General Martin Dempsey,
Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**

Location: Pentagon Briefing Room, Arlington, Virginia

Time: 11:19 a.m. EDT, Date: Wednesday, September 18, 2013

Copyright © 2013 by Federal News Service, LLC, 1120 G Street NW, Suite 990, Washington, DC 20005.
Federal News Service is a private firm not affiliated with the federal government. No portion of
this report may be copied, sold or transmitted without the written authority of Federal News Service.
This report might not be claimed as to any part of the original work prepared by a United States government
employee as a part of that person's official duties. For information on subscribing to the FNS
Transcripts Database or any other FNS product, please email info@fednews.com or call 1-800-347-4900.

SECRETARY CHARLES HAGEL: Good morning. Let me begin with a few words
about Monday's tragedy.

As the investigation proceeds into the shooting at the Washington Navy Yard, I have
been consulting closely with DOD's leadership, including Secretary Mabus and Chief of
Naval Operations Admiral Greenert, as well as with our federal and law enforcement
officials. I also conferred yesterday with the FBI director, Director Comey, the attorney
general, Attorney General Holder, and President Obama.

First, our thoughts and our prayers are with the victims, their families and all who have
been affected by what happened at the Navy shipyard on Monday. We will grieve, we
will remember, and we will comfort each other. The Department of Defense is a strong
and resilient community, and we will do everything we can to help our colleagues at the
Navy Yard get through this terrible, terrible time.

In the coming days, more information will come to light about what happened, about
what went wrong and, importantly, what must be fixed.

Yesterday I directed two department-wide reviews. These reviews will be led by Deputy
Secretary Ash Carter. And we will do everything possible to prevent this from happening
again.

First, I directed a review of physical security and access procedures at all DOD
installations worldwide. The highest responsibilities leaders have is to take care of their
people, and our people deserve safe and secure workplaces wherever they are. Second,
Deputy Secretary Carter will also lead a review of DOD's practices and procedures for
granting and renewing security clearances, including those held by contractors. This
review will be closely coordinated with other federal agencies currently examining these
procedures, including the DNI and OMB.

I've also directed that an independent panel be established. This independent panel will conduct its own assessment of security at DOD facilities and our security clearance procedures and practices. The panel's work will strengthen Secretary Carter's efforts, and they will provide their findings directly to me.

The Department of Defense will carefully examine the assessments, the conclusions and recommendations of these reviews, and we will effectively implement them. As you know, the Navy is also conducting its own review, and those results will feed into the broader DOD review worldwide.

Where there are gaps, we will close them. Where there are inadequacies, we will address them. And where there are failures, we will correct them.

We owe the victims, their families and all our people nothing less. Thank you.

General Dempsey.

GENERAL MARTIN DEMPSEY: Thanks, Mr. Secretary. I also want to add my condolences over Monday's horrific shootings at the Navy Yard. My heart goes out to the families of our fallen, to those injured during the attack, their co-workers and to the entire Navy family.

While I cannot discuss the details of an ongoing investigation, I can discuss the bravery of the first responders. Even in the midst of tragedy, there are moments of triumph. The most visible feats were accomplished by professionals -- our military, police and EMTs -- but there were other unseen moments equally heroic.

I was especially inspired by the story of Omar Grant, a Navy Yard civilian who helped a blind colleague to safety as they exited Building 197 in the middle of the shooting. Omar refused to leave his friend behind. The urge to run toward danger to help someone in need is a testament to an American's character.

Our military family will continue to help those in need. Secretary of the Navy has granted designee status to provide medical care to those injured in the attacks. We've also mobilized teams of military chaplains throughout the area to minister to those in need. And counseling services are available for all of those affected by Monday's rampage. And I look forward to your questions.

SEC. HAGEL: Thank you.

Leah (sp).

Q: Mr. Secretary, and perhaps Mr. Chairman if you can answer, to the general public who sees sort of -- this sort of string of events, s 22 1(a)(ii) Bradley Manning and now this, it's sort of looks as though there are incidents, there are studies, and something happens again. Is there -- you did extensive studies after the Hasan incident. So can you talk about what is it -- what changes were not made then that should have been made? Are there gaps? And when you look at security clearances, should we lower the bar to include more personal information to take note of greater personal information, in order to protect safety?

Where is that line?

SEC. HAGEL: Well, first, obviously, something went wrong. That's the point of the directives that I have made in the reviews that will go forward. As I said in my comments, we will review everything, and from that review, the intensity of that review, the depth and width of that review, we would hope that we will find some answers to how we do it better, how can we do it better.

The fact is, starting with the tragedy of what happened Monday -- and you mentioned other tragedies -- we don't live in a risk-free society. And every day, all the millions of DOD employees, whether they're uniform or civilian, that come to work, help this country, contribute to the security and safety of this country, there's always some risk to that. And that isn't a good answer; that's not good enough. They deserve the security of a safe environment. We will find those gaps, as I said, and we will fix those gaps.

So to go beyond that in the specific areas of your questions, I would leave that to the review. There are many questions that are going to be asked, need to be asked, many reviews, and the intensity of those reviews have to go down to every aspect, the security of our physical premises, the security clearance, standards of that security clearance, are they strong enough, why do we do certain things the way we do -- we need answers. And we will find those answers.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, I'd just add that the -- to what the secretary said -- in terms of what we changed after some of those earlier incidents that early indications actually contributed to the -- to a less horrific outcome, were alert notices; coordination, in

advance of crises, with other agencies of government; training for employees and law enforcement on active shooter scenarios.

So I mean, some of the things we did as a result of those earlier incidents, we believe, actually reaped the benefit we intended.

The clearance piece of this is one I think we very clearly have to take another look at, and the secretary's directed us to do so.

Q: Mr. Secretary, do you --

(Cross talk.)

SEC. HAGEL: Go ahead, Jim.

Q: Do you believe that the security clearance procedures and investigations are not rigorous enough or that for the lower-level security clearances, that that 10-year time frame may be too long?

And again, a question for you, General Dempsey, on Syria: You've expressed concerns before about the difficulties in securing chemical weapons sites in Syria, even in a nonhostile environment. If Syria should agree to open up its sites not only to inspection by seizure by the end of this week or in any time frame, just how difficult would that be? Do you think it's even possible to secure those weapons during a civil war?

SEC. HAGEL: Well, on your question regarding time frames on security clearances and the entire specifics and components of security clearances -- time frame, the depth of the clearance, kind of clearance, access different clearances give individuals -- we're going to look at all that.

Obviously the longer clearances go without review, there's some jeopardy to that; there's no question about it.

So we're going to take a look at every one of those components.

GEN. DEMPSEY: On Syria, my current role, and the current role of the military is to provide some planning assistance to the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons, OPCW, who has the lead, and as well as to maintain the credible threat of force should the diplomatic track fail.

My comments about the security of the stockpile remain valid. That is to say, it's a very challenging -- it's a very challenging environment. We -- indicators are at this point, though, that the regime does have control of its stockpile. And so long as they agree to

the framework which causes them to be responsible for the security, the movement, the protection of the investigators or the inspectors, then I think that the answer to your question is, it is -- it is feasible, but we've got to make sure we keep our eye on all of those things.

Q: But the idea that Syria, or, with the help of international assistance -- other foreign militaries -- would that involve the U.S., by the way? The U.S. has been trying for decades -- in the process for decades to rid the U.S. and the Russians, too, of their chemical weapons. How could this be done in such a short time frame in the middle of a civil war?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, the framework calls for it to be controlled, destroyed, or moved, and I think, in some combination -- you asked me, is it feasible? In some combination, it is feasible. But those details will have to be worked by the OPCW.

MR. : (Julian ?).

Q: To General Dempsey -- I wonder if you think today Mr. Assad is stronger -- where you assess the rebels?

And to Mr. Hagel, I wonder if you could about what your feeling of this -- of how the Syria incident, how this has resolved itself. Are you comfortable with the path the United States is on? Do we still need to keep up military pressure?

GEN. DEMPSEY: You know, I don't -- I haven't spent much time trying to understand Assad's personal feelings about this recent turn of events. I've said previously, and I'll say it again, that these kind of conflicts ebb and flow. We know from open-source reporting that the opposition is concerned that this focus on chemicals will detract from the willingness not only of the United States but other partners to support them.

But I'll tell you, you know, in terms of threats to U.S., direct threats to U.S. interests, I think that -- and I have said previously -- that the elimination of the Assad regime's chemical capability is right at the top of our national interests. And so if this process bears fruit and achieves its stated purpose, we will be in a better position.

SEC. HAGEL: Julian (ph), I think first, it's clear that the credible threat of U.S. force in Syria led to the diplomatic process where we are today. Yes, we should keep that military option exactly where it is. We have assured the president that our assets and force posture remain the same. We are prepared to exercise any option that he would select.

But at the same time, you ask if I was comfortable with the process as it is now. Yes. That was always an objective of the president, a diplomatic solution, a resolution. So I think it's wise to let that process play out.

Now remember the resolution, when the president made the decision he did in the resolution to go to Congress, was about chemical weapons. And so the diplomatic process, the track we're on, I think is the responsible, wise approach. But it was the credible force of threat that got us to where we are, and we'll continue to have that credible option available to the president.

Q: Mr. Secretary? Let me ask, sir, on the alleged shooter, even though all these reviews are going on about the security procedures, there seems to be have been one clear instance where he could have been stopped, which was last month the Rhode Island police informed the Navy that he, Alexis, he called and he said he was hearing paranoid voices. How concerned are you that the Navy probably did not act on it; or do you know anything about what the Navy did in that particular instance?

And if I could ask you a question on Egypt, you've had several conversations with al-Sisi in Egypt, and there has been some conversations and talk about stopping the supply of further U.S. military equipment. Any decisions have you made about, you know, stopping the delivery of the next batch of Apache helicopters to Egypt? Thank you.

SEC. HAGEL: On the Egypt question, no final decision has been made.

On the question regarding the Rhode Island incident with this individual, we are reviewing all that. I'm aware of those reports. I haven't seen the specifics. But we will, obviously, get those kind of specifics (sic) -- this -- specifics. This will be part of the mix here, what should have been done that wasn't done, should have been more done, how could we have brought those kind of reports into the clearance process, and so on.

So I think that'll be all part of the review.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

SEC. HAGEL: Jim.

Q: Has the Navy explained to you why Alexis was granted a secret security clearance in the first place, despite a police record? And have they explained to you -- or either of you -- why he was allowed to keep that secret security clearance despite a growing number of police incidents?

SEC. HAGEL: The quick answer is no. I haven't seen all of it. I will continue to see more of it. You've asked some very basic, relevant questions which will, obviously, again, be part of all the review. The Navy's looking at this. They're going back into the history of it all.

So I don't know, General, do you want to say anything?

Q: On Syria -- just on Syria: Is the Pentagon going to take charge of arming the Syrian rebels or is that option now postponed because of this agreement to remove Syria's chemical weapons? And could you just give us both -- both of you give us an idea of what are the factors involved as you look at that option?

SEC. HAGEL: Well, the president said that he is looking at all options. The Pentagon is not presently directly involved in any of those lethal weapons activities. So the president continues to look at different options -- (inaudible) --

Q: But just --

Q: (Inaudible) -- making that change, would you advise -- (inaudible) --

SEC. HAGEL: Well, those discussions are ongoing. Thank you.

GEN. DEMPSEY: And of course, as I've said previously, we have any number of options under development that could expand our support to the moderate opposition, but no decision has been taken at this point.

SEC. HAGEL: Barbara.

Q: Mr. Secretary, the department's now lost people in three major gun violence incidents, Aurora, of course, Fort Hood and this.

My question to both of you is you have to have reviews, but is that good enough at this point? Is that enough? Why not break the mold and get involved in the public -- the department, both of you gentlemen, the U.S. military, and get involved in the public debate in this country about gun violence? We've not heard either of you say you're taking -- you're going to -- you're supporting the president's position on what he supports on gun violence and gun registration. Why not get involved? Why not talk about it? And specifically, then, can we both hear -- hear both of your views about gun violence in this country and what you -- now that you've lost so many people, military families are at risk. What do you think need needs to be done?

SEC. HAGEL: Well, to start with, gun violence is an issue. And it is tragic, and I think every American who has witnessed this over the years, and as the general and I have

expressed our sense about it this morning, our thoughts and prayers and heart goes out to everyone who was a victim of this.

Gun violence is a violation of the law. And so there's no question that it's -- it's not a matter of trying to defend it or choose it.

As to our position here -- and General Dempsey can speak for himself, but my role as secretary of defense -- I'm not involved in domestic policy issues. That's not my role. That's not my responsibility.

GEN. DEMPSEY: No, I couldn't agree more, Mr. Secretary. I -- you know, the -- it's pretty difficult to separate the views of citizen Dempsey from Chairman Dempsey, so I try not to do that.

And it is not my role, as the chairman, to become involved in domestic political issues.

Q: I quite understand that. My question, though, is -- I guess you're both saying -- and no disrespect -- you've lost people; it's a risk to military families in this country, but you're going to -- genuinely, you're going to stay out of the public debate on this question and the debate over the president's policies and views on this?

SEC. HAGEL: Well, again, I would say my role is not a role of a policymaker. When I am called to Congress, I answer questions about security in this country and the aspects of it and the responsibilities I have. I don't engage in domestic policy debates. That's not my -- that's not my role.

Q: Your two predecessors were very critical last night of the administration's policy in Syria. Secretary Gates weighed in, saying that this would be -- that if there were military action taken over a couple of days, this would throw fire onto a situation. He said launching a couple of missiles over a couple of days is not a strategy. Secretary Panetta was equally -- he was also critical. How do you respond to that, and do you agree with them?

And General Dempsey, did budget cuts have anything to do with the attack at the Navy Yard on Monday? And a few years back, they took off mental health questions on the security clearance reviews in order to destigmatize PTSD. Do you think that mental health questions should be returned to the security reviews because they are relevant? Do you think you're in a difficult position, having tried to destigmatize mental health issues on the one hand and remove those questions from security clearance forms?

SEC. HAGEL: I have the greatest respect for Secretaries Panetta and Gates.

They obviously have every right to their opinions, on every issue. And if they feel it is appropriate, they have every right to express those, those views.

Obviously I don't agree with their perspectives. And I again understand what they're saying, but I -- as I have said a number of times in the last two weeks on Capitol Hill, I was part of the decision and the process that led up to the president's decision. I support those decisions. Thank you.

Q: (Off mic) -- to weigh in like this?

SEC. HAGEL: Is it what?

Q: Is it helpful for them to weigh in like this?

SEC. HAGEL: Like I said, they are individuals, private citizens, and they have every right to express themselves if they feel they need to or want to.

GEN. DEMPSEY: On the -- let me categorically assure you that, based on testimony that Admiral Greenert actually is giving as we're sitting here, that there -- the budget issue did not degrade the security at the Navy Yard and in any way contribute to this. As for the questions about mental health on security clearance forms, I actually was one of those, with Pete Chiarelli and others, who believed that men and women should have the opportunity to overcome their mental disorders or their mental challenges or their clinical health challenges and shouldn't be stigmatized. And so I still remain in that camp that a man or woman should have the the ability to -- with treatment, to overcome them and then to have a fruitful life and gain employment, including inside the military.

This particular individual of course wasn't a simple matter. I don't know what the investigation will determine, but he committed murder.

And I'm not sure that any particular question or lack of question on a security clearance would probably have revealed that.

Q: Mr. Secretary? On Aaron Alexis, when you look at his record since 2004, with the incident in Seattle, does anything jump out at either of you, any red flag that says someone should have caught this guy, he should have been barred from military service, should not have received a security clearance, or is it that he fell below the radar? He was arrested but not charged. He apparently had a psychotic episode last month in Newport, but no doctor ever judged him to be mentally ill.

What's your sense of it? Red flag or just below the radar?

SEC. HAGEL: Well, obviously there were a lot of red flags, as you noted. Why they didn't get picked up, why they didn't get incorporated into the clearance process, what he was doing, those are all legitimate questions that we're going to be dealing with. How do we fix it?

Q: But he was never charged. He was never charged. He was arrested but not charged.

SEC. HAGEL: Well, I know. That's, again, part of the complications. But what I understand, though, it was passed on to different officials. But to go beyond that without any more facts, I don't want to do that.

But obviously, when you go back in hindsight and look at all this, there were some red flags, of course there were. And should we have picked them up? Why didn't we? How could we have? All those questions need to be answered.

Q: General?

GEN. DEMPSEY: I think this will be scrutinized a great deal. And until I understand, you know, the outcome of the investigation, I can't render a judgment about whether it was a red flag or just something that flew beneath the radar.

SEC. HAGEL: Thank you.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Thanks.

(C) 2013 Federal News Service

END