



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

FEB - 9 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Guidance on Secretary of Defense RAHs

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

Components designated as the Office of Primary Responsibility will provide SD RAH 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.

Detailed guidance and associated templates are attached. My points of contact (POCs) for this guidance are my Military Assistants (MAs), at (703) 692-7125 or execsecma2@sd.mil. POCs for questions relating to DSD RAHs are the DSD MAs, at (703) 692-7150 or depsecdefnco@sd.mil.

David S. Soldow
CAPT, USN
Executive Secretary

Attachments:
As stated

cc:
Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Oversight
Director of Administration and Management



OSD001193-21/CMD001910-21

General Guidance for Preparing Secretary of Defense RAH Packages

1. **Components will deliver RAHs electronically via email as the primary method** of delivery. Read-ahead (RAH) products shall be consolidated into as few files as possible and emailed to Ms. Belinda Purify (Belinda.purify@sd.mil), the MAs (ExecSecMA2@sd.mil), and copy the Executive Secretary (david.soldow@sd.mil). A single PDF file is the standard.
2. Deadline for RAHs 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 RAH is due at 1200 on Monday. If a meeting is at 1000 Monday, the RAH is due at 1200 on Thursday the week prior.
3. Components must notify the Executive Secretary, Ms. Belinda Purify, or Major Matthew Brown at (703) 692-7122 if they anticipate submitting a RAH late. Draft RAHs are preferred to late RAHs. **If a RAH is late, the responsible component shall provide six hard copies of the RAH (complete, printed single-sided, and with all appropriate tab dividers) along with the electronic delivery.**
4. Secret RAHs shall be submitted via email to the same group expect with the @sd.smil.mil address.
5. Top Secret RAHs shall be submitted via email to ExecSecMA2@sd.ic.gov, or otherwise handled on a case-by-case basis.
6. Special Access Program (SAP) RAHs shall be provided hard copy only directly to the Executive Secretary.
7. Primary offices are responsible for coordinating with secondary offices and consolidating material into a single product to avoid unnecessary duplication. Primary offices shall **complete all coordination before submitting** the RAH.
8. Primary offices shall ensure the appropriate official within their organization approves and initials all RAH packages before submission.
9. When preparing classified documents, refer to DoD 5200.1-PH, the DoD Guide to Marking Classified Documents. Classified RAHs shall contain appropriate portion markings. DoDI 5200-48 replaces “For Official Use Only” with “Controlled Unclassified Information.”
10. RAHs incorporating PowerPoint should be limited to ten (10) slides of content per hour of meeting engagement. To avoid quality loss, PowerPoint presentations shall be saved as a PDF file and emailed instead of scanned hard copy slides.
11. The point of contact regarding questions about specific topics or required coordination are the Executive Secretariat Military Assistants at (703) 692-7125 or execsecma2@sd.mil.

Digital Submission Guidance
Secretary of Defense RAH Packages

1. Due to the current and projected long term disaggregated work environment, components may also turn in RAHs via the Intelink NIPR and SIPR RAH Drop Boxes as a backup to email.
2. Personnel must first activate their Intelink account and request access by clicking on the links above—this must be done for both NIPR and SIPR.
NIPR: <https://intelshare.intelink.gov/sites/SecDefRAH>
SIPR: <https://intelshare.intelink.sgov.gov/sites/SecDef/RAH>
3. The ExecSec MAs will receive the request for access and grant permission only to respective component folder.
4. Components shall submit RAHs into their folder as a **single .pdf file** containing all attachments.
5. Components should attempt to submit Unclassified RAHs via SIPR Intelink. If unable, they may submit via NIPR Intelink and contact the ExecSec MAs for assistance in transferring files to SIPR.
6. Components shall use the following naming convention to label RAHs:
 - i. Classification_Component_Subject RAH_Date_Version.
 - ii. For instance, SECRET_USP_France Bilat RAH_25MAR2020_Version2
7. Components shall make positive contact with Ms. Purifoy to notify her that a RAH has been submitted.
8. Top Secret and SAP RAHs shall be handled as detailed before.
9. For any questions or assistance with these instructions, contact the ExecSec ESMAs at (703)692-7125 or ExecSecMA2@sd.mil

Guidelines for Preparing Secretary of Defense RAH Packages

1. Habits:

- a. Take mental responsibility for the outcome associated with the RAH. Think through the information the Secretary needs to make decisions and persuade others. The ultimate goal is to answer the Secretary's questions before he asks them.
- b. Put the bottom line up front. Don't bury the lead under non-essential information.
- c. Elevate the discussion. Unless information is immediately intuitive, present information within its larger context, giving the Secretary a sense of relative importance and relevance to the situation.
- d. Control the pace of information. As much as possible, clarify the big ideas, separate them into discrete thoughts, and present them in logical order.
- e. Be precise and don't overreach. Every sentence in a read ahead should either state a fact, provide context about the fact, or characterize the fact.
- f. 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.

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. Format: (See attached template Page 5)

a. Preparation:

- (1) Set 1-inch left/right margins, 1-inch top and bottom margins.
- (2) Use 14-point, Times New Roman font. Size 12-point font may be used if necessary to reduce page count.
- (3) Double space between items, single space between bullets.
- (4) Print double-sided for all documents over one page.
- (5) Include page numbers on all documents longer than one page.
- (6) Use appropriately sized paperclips to fasten packages.

b. Capitalization, Punctuation, and Usage:

- (1) Do not use room numbers, rather use: SecDef Conference Room (for 3E863) or DepSecDef Conference Room (for 3E928).
- (2) Use full names, not initials.

c. Content:

- (1) **Action Officer:** include the name of the action officer/subject matter expert, phone number, and email in the upper right hand corner. (Example: Prepared By: Colonel Jane Doe; (703) 692-7125; jane.doe@sd.mil)
- (2) **Read Ahead / Background:** the first item in the package, limited to no more than two (2) pages.
- (3) **Talking / Discussion Points:** the second item in the package, limited to 3-4 bullets.

- (4) **Attachments:** only include documents that will be presented or referenced during the meeting.
 - d. **Revisions: Submit revisions only if there is a substantive change approved by your Principal.** For revised RAH 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.
- 4. Principal/National Security Council RAH Format** (See attached template Page 6):
- a. **Preparation:** In accordance with SD RAH Packages.
 - b. **Content:**
 - (1) **Policy RAH** is the top page.
 - (2) **Meeting Purpose** (limit to 1-2 pages): State clearly whether this is a decision meeting, an info update, or a request for recommendations. 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, etc.)
 - (3) **Background:**
 - (a) Organize by Agenda Items.
 - (b) Describe the meeting roadmap (e.g., State will brief topic x, DoD will respond)
 - (c) Include bureaucratic state of play – where do agency principals stand on the topics being discussed?
 - (4) **Talking Points** (limit to 2 pages): Organize talking points by agenda item.
- 5. Talking/Discussion Points Format** (See attached template Page 7):
- a. **Preparation:**
 - (1) Set 1-inch left/right margins, 1-inch top and bottom margins.
 - (2) Use 14-point, Times New Roman font.
 - b. **Content:**
 - (1) Points are the second item in the package (limited to 1 page) with no more than 3-4 bullets. These points should be short and clear statements of major issues or points to be covered in the meeting. They should:
 - (a) Avoid pleasantries or fillers.
 - (b) Focus on achieving the objectives of the meeting.
 - (2) If an **internal meeting**, these **discussion points** should:
 - (a) Serve as a discussion guide.
 - (b) Highlight any decisions the Secretary may be asked to make.
 - (3) If an **external meeting**, these **talking points** should:
 - (a) Provide the Secretary with crisp language to achieve the objectives of the meeting.
 - (b) Be crafted to ensure a logical flow of conversation. Write as you anticipate conversation will occur.
 - (4) If a **foreign visitor**, these **talking points** should:
 - (a) Address precisely what the dignitary is doing with respect to the SD/DSD's priorities.
 - (b) Address additional support they are providing to U.S. security objectives.
 - (c) Address basic defense relationship and country information, as relevant.

- c. **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. **Preparation:**

- (1) Set 1-inch left/right margins, 1-inch top and bottom margins.
- (2) Use 14-point, Times New Roman font.
- (3) Double space between items, single space between bullets.
- (4) Limit to one page. If a second page is necessary, keep all talking points together on the subsequent page.

b. **Content:**

- (1) **Background:** In italics, briefly state who requested call; when the two last spoke; and latest state of play on issue to be discussed.
- (2) **Talking Points:** Bullet style.

—SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR STANDARD RAHS—

Prepared By: Action Officer
(xxx) xxx-xxxx, action.officer@sd.mil

RAH FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Name of Person/Group Meeting is With (Include pronunciation, if needed)
MMM DD, YYYY, HHHH-HHHH, Room #

From: Under Secretary xxx

Meeting Purpose: One to three sentence executive summary of the topic, the reason that the event is taking place (e.g., SD 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, 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., Policy and Joint Staff disagree over proposal x; Cabinet Secretary x will ask you to fund project x).

Attachments:

- Include Talking Points at Tab A (if required); include any additional attachments at subsequent Tabs (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 biography(s) and proof of relevant coordination.

—SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR PC/NSC RAHS—

Prepared By: Action Officer
(xxx) xxx-xxxx, action.officer@sd.mil

Meeting Purpose

- State clearly whether this is a decision meeting, an info update, or a request for recommendations. 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, etc.)
- Limit to one to two pages.

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 – outline 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 three tabs.

—SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR TAB—

TAB

A

—SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR TALKING/DISCUSSION POINTS—

TALKING/DISCUSSION POINTS

- Talking/Discussion points are the second item in the package (limited to one page). Place them at TAB A.
- Draft clear, concise statements concerning major issues that will be covered in the meeting.
 - 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 of conversation.
- Set 1-inch left/right margins, 1-inch top and bottom margins.
- Use 14 point, Times New Roman font.
- Print single sided.
- 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.).

—SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR PHONE CALL TALKING POINTS—

**TALKING POINTS FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CALL WITH
TITLE, NAME (Pronunciation, if needed)
MMM DD, YYYY, HHHH**

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

RAH 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 single-sided.**

**Sample Template for Notecard
(DD Month YYYY)**

BLUF: Provide topline talking points/memory joggers for ALL meetings with non-DoD personnel (foreign counterparts, Cabinet Secretaries, associations, etc.).

Talking Points:

- 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).

(1) Talking Point 1

- Times New Roman – Size 14 font

(2) Talking Point 2

- Card size – 5”x8”

(3) Talking Point 3

- Ensure component / version added in footer

Closing: Thank you for all you do, I look forward to another week of the DoD leading the way.