POSITION DESCRIPTION

**undersecretary for policy, Department of defense**

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Armed Services |
| Agency Mission | The mission of the Department of Defense is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country. |
| Position Overview | The undersecretary of defense for policy (USDP) is the principal staff assistant and adviser to both the secretary of defense and the deputy secretary of defense for all matters concerning the formation of national security and defense policy and the integration and oversight of DOD policy and plans to achieve national security objectives. He/she serves as the Department of Defense’s voice in the interagency process, oversees the contingency planning by the combat commanders and is the primary liaison with foreign senior defense officials. |
| Compensation | Level III $165,300 (5 U.S.C. § 5314)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Defense |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy had a fiscal 2016 actual budget of $51.748 million. The fiscal 2018 estimate is for $174.5 million.[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Serves as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the secretary of defense and the deputy secretary of defense for all matters on the formulation of national security and defense policy and the integration and oversight of Department of Defense policy and plans to achieve national security objectives. * Represents the DOD in matters involving the National Security Council (NSC), the Department of State and the other federal departments, agencies and inter-agency groups with responsibility for national security policy. * Advises the secretary on crisis prevention and management. * Develops and coordinates DOD policy and positions for international negotiations on arms control implementation and/or compliance issues. * Develops DOD policy on the conduct of alliances and defense relationships with foreign governments, their military establishments and international organizations. * Develops and oversees the implementation of international security strategy and policy and plans for defense security assistance. * Provides oversight of all DOD activities related to international technology transfer. * Oversees the implementation of DOD strategy and policy for deployment and employment of strategic and theater nuclear offensive and missile defense forces. * Reviews and evaluates plans, programs and systems requirements for policy to reduce and counter the threat to the United States Armed Forces and allies. * Assists the secretary of defense in preparing written policy guidance for the preparation and review of contingency plans and in reviewing such plans. * Provides direction and supervision for policy, program planning and execution and allocation and use of resources for the activities of DOD for combating terrorism. * Supervises and directs activities of the DOD relating to export controls, when directed. |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * A person may not be appointed as undersecretary within seven years after relief from active duty as a commissioned officer of a regular component of an armed force (10 U.S.C. § 134). * Extensive leadership and managerial experience * Strong substantive expertise in military policy and DOD’s functions and policies * Executive leadership experience including DOD experience * Experience dealing with high-profile stakeholders * Experience leading through unexpected crisis situations |
| Competencies | * Exceptional communications and negotiation skills * Ability to integrate diverse missions and organizations * Ability to work under high pressure * High level of energy for extensive foreign and domestic travel and interactions * Ability to handle sensitive matters |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Brian P. McKeon (2016 to 2017) (Acting) – Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy; Deputy Assistant to the President; Executive Secretary of the National Security Council; Chief of Staff for the National Security Council | |
| James N. Miller Jr. (2012 to 2014) – Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense; Senior Staff, House Armed Services Committee; Senior Vice-President and Director of Studies at the Center for a New American Security | |
| Michele Flournoy (2009 to 2012) – Co-leader, President Obama’s Defense Department transition team; Co-Founder, the Center for a New American Security; Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Threat Reduction; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy | |

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2018/budget\_justification/pdfs/01\_Operation\_and\_Maintenance/O\_M\_VOL\_1\_PART\_1/OSD\_OP-5.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-2)