

SECTION 3: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT

3.1. ASSIGNING ACTION ON SECDEF, DEPSECDEF, AND EXECSEC CORRESPONDENCE.

a. The Correspondence Management Division (CMD), ESD will receive, analyze, and assign actions in CATMS for:

- (1) Correspondence addressed to the SecDef, the DepSecDef, or the ExecSec.
- (2) Congressional correspondence on behalf of a constituent addressed to the ASD(LA).
- (3) All White House correspondence referred to the DoD.

b. CMD will assign and identify correspondence using a control number consisting of the letters “OSD,” followed by a six-digit number, a hyphen, and the last two digits of the current year (e.g., “OSD012345-19”).

3.2. ASSIGNING SUSPENSE DATES.

a. CMD will use the date of receipt of the document as the basis for assigning the action and associated tasker suspense date, starting on the next working day. The suspense timelines are shown in Table 1.

b. CMD may alter timelines when actions require shorter or longer processing times.

Table 1. Action Suspense Types and Timelines

Standard Action Types	Suspense (Business Days)
Answer SecDef Note (ASN)	5
Answer DepSecDef Note (ADN)	5
Prepare Reply for ExecSec Signature (PRE)	10
Comments and Recommendations (C&R)	5
Prepare Reply for SecDef Signature (PRS)	10
Prepare Reply for DepSecDef Signature (PRD)	10
Reply Direct by the Component Head (RDC)	14
Reply Direct (RD)	14
For Appropriate Action (FAA)	-
Information and Retention (I&R)	-
Situation or Category-Specific Action Types	Suspense (Business Days)
President, Vice President, White House Chief of Staff	1 calendar day
Cabinet Heads, U.S. Governors, and Senior White House Staff	5
White House Referrals	6
Members of Congress	5
Ministers of Defense	5
White House Bulk RED-DOT Cases (RD)	5
Non-Congressional Correspondence (PRS or PRD)	10
Congressional Constituent Inquires Addressed to ASD/LA) (RD)	10
White House Bulk Cases (RD)	14
Invitations Tasked for C&R	14
Detail Requests from Outside DoD	30

3.3. ROUTING INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.

a. To forward incoming SecDef, DepSecDef, and ExecSec correspondence to the OSD and DoD Components, CMD will use CATMS to:

- (1) Disseminate action and information copies to the appropriate offices.
- (2) Indicate what action the office of primary responsibility (OPR) will take and establish a suspense date for the action. See Table 1 for a complete list of directed actions and standard suspense times.
- (3) Identify required coordination.

- (4) Provide specific guidance as necessary.
- (5) Assign an OSD control number in accordance with Paragraph 3.1.b.

b. If correspondence is received by a Component and is addressed to the SecDef, the DepSecDef, or the ExecSec, it must be forwarded to CMD for controlling purposes.

3.4. PROCESSING OSD AND DOD COMPONENT ACTIONS.

CCMOs must process SecDef, DepSecDef, and ExecSec materials through CMD, except those materials in Table 2, which must be processed as indicated.

Table 2. Materials Not Processed Through CMD

Type of Material	Where to Deliver
Read-ahead material	ExecSec Confidential Assistant
Intelligence daily summaries	Executive Secretariat Rear (ESR)
Operational summaries (daily and weekly) from the Operations Directorate of the Joint Staff	ESR
Notification to White House of Service member death	ESR
Time-sensitive communications requiring SecDef or DepSecDef attention within 2 hours, as confirmed by the ExecSec, who takes them directly to the SecDef or DepSecDef	ESR

3.5. PROVIDING STATUS OR REQUESTING CHANGES TO ACTIONS.

a. Use of SD Form 391, “Secretary of Defense Correspondence Action Report.”

(1) CCMOs must submit an SD Form 391 to CMD with all action correspondence to request the actions in Paragraphs 3.5.a.(1)(a) through 3.5.a.(1)(f). The SD Form 391 is available at https://www.esd.whs.mil/Directives/forms/sd_forms, or can be generated from the CATMS tasker. The SD Form 391 can be used to:

- (a) Close an action.
- (b) Request a suspense extension.
- (c) Provide a copy of an interim reply to CMD.
- (d) Request cancellation of an action.
- (e) Appeal and request transfer of an assigned action to another OSD or DoD Component.

(f) Request downgrade of an assigned action.

(2) CMD will update CATMS with a scanned copy of the approved or disapproved SD Form 391, and share it with the OPR.

b. Changes to Action Assignments.

(1) To appeal an action assignment, the OPR CCMO must contact CMD within 24 hours of the date assigned in CATMS. When provided with a reasonable rationale for reassignment, CMD will typically accept the action for transfer without further coordination and re-task the action. If approved, CMD will assign a new suspense in CATMS, and assign to the new OPR.

(2) The OPR is responsible for coordinating all action assignment transfers after the initial 24-hour period. When requesting a transfer, the OPR must:

(a) Ensure the Component CCMO accepts transfer of the action.

(b) Annotate the SD Form 391 with the name, office, and telephone number of the accepting official.

(c) Forward the action to CMD. CMD will route the action to the ExecSec for final decision.

(3) When newspaper articles, press releases, speeches by DoD officials, or policy change announcements result in repeated public inquiries or a write-in campaign, the OPR may initiate a transfer to the ATSD(PA) and request the Office of the ATSD(PA) be designated as the OPR for future inquiries on the subject.

(a) When initiating a transfer to the ATSD(PA), the OPR must return the original correspondence (if the original was received) and proposed reply to CMD along with the SD Form 391 annotated with the name and telephone number of the ATSD(PA) accepting official.

(b) The originating OPR must provide the ATSD(PA) with information for creating replies and updated information if circumstances change.

(4) On occasion, the SecDef or the DepSecDef, their Military or Special Assistants, or the ExecSec may change an action assignment. In these instances, CMD will update the action assignment in CATMS and share it with the new OPR.

(5) If the OPR requests an extension to a congressional tasking, an OPR-generated interim response must be included in this request to change, and sent to the Office of the ASD(LA) for approval or disapproval. The OASD(LA) POC who approves the action must be included on the request to CMD, with a copy of the interim response.

(6) The Component approval authority for SD Form 391 depends on the type of action and the number of extensions, and are listed in Table 3. Component heads may designate in writing an additional senior official for this purpose by submitting an Information Memorandum to ExecSec.

Table 3. SD Form 391 Approval Authorities

Action Type	Approval Authority
PRS (Prepare Reply for SecDef Signature)	Component Head, Principal Deputy, or Designated Senior Official (Extensions Only)
PRD (Prepare Reply for DepSecDef Signature)	
ASN (Answer SecDef Note)	
ASD (Answer DepSecDef Note)	
C&R (Comments and Recommendations)	
PRE (Prepare Reply for ExecSec Signature)	
RDC (Reply Direct by the Component Head)	Component Correspondence Management Officer (1 st and 2 nd Extension Request)
RDC (Reply Direct by the Component Head)	Component Head, Principal Deputy, or Designated Senior Official (3 rd Extension Request and Higher)
RD (Reply Direct) – Component Level Expert	Component Correspondence Management Officer
24-Hour Transfer Rule Request	
All other changes (Upgrade, Downgrade, Cancellation, Action Complete, etc.)	

3.6. COORDINATING ASSIGNED ACTIONS.

CCMOs will coordinate with OSD and DoD Components designated in the action assignment and any others that may have an interest in or be affected by the outcome of the action. Coordination with those Components will be done simultaneously to ensure a timely response.

a. For correspondence prepared for the SecDef, the DepSecDef, or the ExecSec signature, obtain concurrence or comments from the OSD and DoD Component heads or, in their absence, from their deputies.

b. For correspondence prepared for signature of OSD and DoD Component head or below, obtain coordination at the appropriate level as determined by the responding Component.

c. Disagreements about recommendations or a lack of response from a coordinating office will not delay the action. To address such situations, CCMOs will:

(1) List nonconcurrences and place the comments at the coordination tab of the action package.

(2) Address nonconcurrency issues in the action memorandum or attached supplement.

(3) For failures to respond, note on the coordination sheet when coordination was attempted but not accomplished.

d. If no coordination is required on an action or information memorandum (referred to in this issuance as “action” or “info” memoranda), enter “NONE” on the coordination line. See Paragraphs 7.3. and 7.4. for details.

e. Coordinate with the ATSD(PA) on all correspondence that:

(1) Contains information with public affairs implications.

(2) Involves requests for SecDef or DepSecDef participation in public fora, such as speaking and media events, or in events in DoD or military settings that may draw media coverage.

f. Coordinate with the GC DoD on all correspondence having legal implications, statutory references, or that make the Department susceptible to legal actions.

g. Coordinate with the ASD(LA) on all correspondence to members of Congress.

h. Coordinate with the Assistant to the SecDef and DepSecDef for protocol on all SecDef and DepSecDef schedule proposals. See Volume 2 of this manual for information on preparing schedule proposals.

3.7. SUBMITTING MATERIALS TO THE SECDEF, THE DEPSECDEF, OR THE EXECSEC.

CCMOs submitting materials to the SecDef, the DepSecDef, or the ExecSec will:

a. Use either an action or info memorandum. See Paragraphs 7.3. and 7.4. for details.

b. Submit packages to CMD for control and forwarding through the appropriate channels.

c. Flag correspondence requiring expeditious processing with a red flag or tab in the upper-left corner. CMD staff must ensure these materials receive priority processing and prompt delivery to the ExecSec.

d. Flag extremely urgent communications requiring SecDef or DepSecDef attention within 2 hours with a green flag or tab in the upper left corner and hand-carry to CMD for expeditious processing or, if directed, hand-carry to the ExecSec.

3.8. SUSPENSE REPORTING.

CMD must maintain correspondence suspense and status reports available to CCMOs and other authorized personnel in CATMS at <https://crm.osd.mil/CATMS1/main.aspx> and select “Component Reports.”

a. CMD will:

(1) Electronically submit the coordination report to all CCMOs before each weekly coordination meeting.

(2) Publish and electronically dispatch the weekly stoplight report and the monthly correspondence awards for excellence.

b. CMD may publish other correspondence tracking and suspense reports as necessary.