

By: Mandy Mayfield | February 13, 2019

## JUST IN: Pentagon: Implementing Section 809 Panel Reforms Will Be ‘Challenging’

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Photo: Melanie Yu / NDIA

Implementing the long list of acquisition reforms suggested by the congressionally chartered Section 809 Panel could be difficult, a top Pentagon official said Feb. 13.

The panel was established by Congress in the fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act to recommend changes to the way the Defense Department acquires technology. In its final report, released in January, the study group said the Pentagon must put its antiquated acquisition system on a “war footing” if it is to maintain its military edge over advanced adversaries. The report put forth 58 recommendations that were added to the 40 recommendations released in volumes 1 and 2, plus one interim report.

<http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2019/2/13/pentagon-implementing-section-809-reforms-will-be-challenging>

The ultimate goal of the proposals is to create a new acquisition system that “will allow DoD to deliver and sustain technologically superior capability inside the turn of near-peer competitors and nonstate actors,” the final report said.

Kevin Fahey, assistant secretary of defense for acquisition, said that while the Pentagon agrees with many of the panel’s recommendations, implementing them is easier said than done. The group's publications totaled more than 2,000 pages.

“There is a lot of good stuff in [the reports] ... but to go through and prioritize and figure out how we can actually implement it is challenging,” Fahey said Feb. 13 at a conference in Washington, D.C., hosted by the National Defense Industrial Association and Covington & Burling. The meeting was focused on issues raised by the study group.

The Section 809 Panel proposed that the department manage capability areas more broadly, arguing that program executive offices were too stovepiped. Fahey noted that Pentagon leaders are interested in testing out a portfolio management initiative this year that will initially focus on the military's nuclear command, control and communications enterprise.

For this year's pilot program, "the biggest focus would be on how do we use it to inform our resources, where do we have gaps, where do we need to fix programs and where do we need to work technologies," Fahey said. This approach is likely to be expanded to other mission areas, perhaps as early as this year, he added.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon will be rewriting important defense acquisition guidelines known as DoD 5000, Fahey noted. The documents provide instructions for following Pentagon acquisition rules. “We are going to start from scratch,” he said.

A key aim of the new guidelines will be improving how the department procures technology, he added.

“When we rewrite [DoD] 5000 it is going to support the idea ... that we've got to focus on real good, competitive prototyping, do a better job in development and how we mature technology, so that when it becomes an acquisition program I know I can afford it" and meet schedule targets, Fahey said.