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House Armed Services oversight will force the Pentagon to step up its game

By [Robert Haddick](#)

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One of the most important consequences of last November's election will be a sharp increase in oversight by committees of the House of Representatives. The normally bipartisan House Armed Services Committee (HASC) will apparently not be an exception to this change in climate.

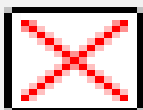
That oversight begins today when the committee [receives testimony](#) on the Pentagon's new efficiency programs from Deputy Defense Secretary William Lynn and the four deputy chiefs of the services. According to *The Hill*, a [top concern](#) of many members of the committee is the Pentagon's cancellation of the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) program. According to the article, HASC members have not received from the Pentagon data or analysis behind the decision. The apparent lack of thorough analysis implies that Defense Secretary Gates's office and Marine Corps leaders do not have a convincing plan for how the Marine Corps will accomplish its amphibious assault missions in the future. This, in turn, implies that the Pentagon is not prepared to describe how the Marine Corps will accomplish its assigned missions, and if it can't, whether the Pentagon proposes changing what those roles and missions should be.

It is easy to pick on the troubled EFV program. In his press conference on January 6, Gates explained how the grossly expensive EFV program promised to absorb virtually all of the Marine Corps' acquisition budget for years to come, an untenable course of action. In a recent [column](#) I wrote for *Foreign Policy*, I described how recent advances in adversary anti-ship missile capabilities have voided the access solutions the EFV originally offered. Although revolutionary when first proposed more than two decades ago, the EFV's capabilities are now outclassed by guided missile capabilities now available to even low-end adversaries.

But easy as it may be to shoot at vulnerable targets like the EFV, this does not relieve the Pentagon and the services from completing their required staff work. In some cases, killing an individual program like the EFV results in an unraveling of associated concepts and assumptions. In this case, OSD and the Marine Corps have yet to present a convincing alternative of how the Marine Corps would either replace the EFV or operate without it, even though they have had many months if not years to prepare for such a contingency. It seems as if many members of HASC are disappointed with the Pentagon's lack of preparation behind the decision to terminate the program.

There are many more issues beyond the EFV where HASC will bring to bear stepped-up oversight. More rigorous oversight will force OSD and the services to present more thorough explanations of the logic and consequences of their policies. The Pentagon will now have to step up its game. With money getting tight, this will only get more challenging to do.

About the Author



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Robert Haddick is a contractor at U.S. Special Operations Command. From January 2009 to September 2012 he was Managing Editor of *Small Wars Journal*. During this time, he wrote the “This Week at War” column for *Foreign Policy*. Haddick was a U.S. Marine Corps officer, served in the 3rd and 23rd Marine Regiments, and deployed to Asia and Africa. He has advised the State Department, the National Intelligence Council, and U.S. Central Command.

In the private sector, Haddick was Director of Research at the Fremont Group, a large private investment firm and an affiliate of the Bechtel Corporation. He established the firm's global proprietary trading operation and was president of one of Fremont's overseas investment subsidiaries.

In addition to *Foreign Policy* and *Small Wars Journal*, Haddick's writing has been published in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Air & Space Power Journal*, and other publications. He has appeared in many radio and television interviews.

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