

Pace to step down as head of Joint Chiefs

by UPI

WASHINGTON - U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates announced Friday that he will recommend the nomination of Admiral Michael Mullen as chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

If he is nominated by President George Bush and confirmed by the Senate, Mullen will replace Gen. Peter Pace. Gates said that he decided not to recommend Pace for another two-year term because his confirmation would be difficult, CNN reported.

Pace, who has been on the Joint Chiefs of Staff for six years, was the first U.S. Marine general to serve as chairman.

Gates said Pace's performance was not the reason for his decision and the general "has served our country with great distinction," The New York Times reported. But he said that naming Mullen, now chief of naval operations would focus confirmation hearings on the future, not on past disappointments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"He has the vision, strategic insight and integrity to lead America's military," Gates said of Mullen.

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