Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2015

General Carter F. Ham, USA, Retired
Chairman
Nat. Commission on the Future of the Army
2530 Crystal Drive, Suite #5000
Arlington, VA 22202

Honorable Thomas R. Lamont
Vice Chairman
Nat. Commission on the Future of the Army
2530 Crystal Drive, Suite #5000
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Ham and Vice Chairman Lamont,

We are writing to express our concerns with the direction in which our Army seems to be heading. The active Army, Reserve, and National Guard are not optimized to meet the threats we face around the world. The Services' declining budgets and subsequent shrinking force structure does nothing to assuage our concerns. We have high hopes that the National Commission on the Future of the Army will identify areas where improvements can be made, and efficiencies found. As members of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, it is our top priority to ensure that our force structure matches the current and future threats. As members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, it is our top priority to ensure that our force structure can combat and neutralize current and future threats. It is also our responsibility to ensure that taxpayer funds are used effectively and strategically to defend against these increasing threats. We look forward to the proposals that the Commission will announce in February, but are troubled by the direction things appear to be heading.

First, it is imperative that a sufficient force structure across all Army components is maintained. We agree with General Mark Milley, the new Army Chief of Staff, that the Army should be working toward a total force concept instead of being focused on parochial goals. We understand Congress needs to act to repeal sequestration and provide adequate and consistent funding for this to happen. In the meantime, the Army needs to prioritize its spending to maximize its available resources. There is no better "bang-for-your-buck" than the National Guard.

The National Guard must be recognized as a legitimate combat reserve of the Army. To relegate them to the sidelines by stripping them of assets, reducing their readiness levels, and removing combat capability is simply unacceptable. In addition, we urge you to reexamine the Department of Defense dwell time guidelines: some adjustments would make the Guard a cost-effective and viable choice for maintaining combat power. As proven over the last 14 years, the National Guard provides a significant cost-savings in dwell while providing an equal capability when deployed. The National Guard is always accessible and has never been better equipped, better led and more ready than it is right now. It is essential to build a force that embraces this unprecedented capability.

Also, we are deeply troubled by the Aviation Restructure Initiative (ARI). Like the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), ARI was a budget-driven proposal. It was constructed quickly, without coordination or consultation with the National Guard. It also does not take into account the second and third-order impacts of the various aspects of the proposal with regard to increased costs or operations. This is why we, along with 213 of our House colleagues, sent a letter to the Chairman and Ranking Members of the

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House Armed Services Committee and the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee requesting a halt be placed on the transfer of Apache helicopters and reductions in force structure.

We refuse to believe that the Army honestly thinks it does not need an operational reserve in attack aviation. Unfortunately, that is exactly what will happen if ARI continues as planned. ARI is a poorly thought out, ill-informed, budget-driven plan that strips the National Guard of its attack capability and relegates them to the sidelines in the fight. We have repeatedly asked for details of this plan, and have yet to receive a satisfactory answer. Congress needs to be provided with the accurate cost-savings, as the majority of the information available thus far, is merely long term cost-avoidance with the potential for immediate increased spending. We have also been advised that the actual cost of the plan was not included in the alleged savings. This includes but is not limited to the cost of increased utilization rate of the new training aircraft, military construction, simulators and per hour flying cost. Every time we ask detailed questions, we are told that someone else has that answer, but we never receive acceptable answers. Every time we dig beneath the surface of this plan, we become more alarmed with the harmful impacts it will have on the Army, Reserves and National Guard.

We have been shown alternatives to ARI that allow for a more strategic distribution of attack aviation throughout the force. As a country currently fighting on many fronts, now is not the time to reduce our combat capabilities. We expect that the Commission will consider all alternatives and listen to all stakeholders before deciding on a final recommendation.

Finally, we have some concerns with the conduct of the Commission itself. It seems that the scope and breadth of the Commission's work is narrower than Congress directed. The Commission appears to be focused on small, incremental changes rather than comprehensive changes. It also appears to have a relatively near-term focus of five to eight years, rather than truly looking at the future of the Army and threats to our country over the next 20 or 30 years. We fear that the Commission may be self-limiting in the scope of its findings based on the belief that it must find "bill-payers" for its recommendations. This narrow approach will not lead to the comprehensive and long-term recommendations that Congress expects and are part of the Commission's mandate.

We remain firmly dedicated to our men and women in the Armed Forces, and want nothing but the best trained, ready and capable force to defend our nation. We have been consistent in our questioning of ARI and our pursuit of a force structure that is capable of meeting the increasingly complex mission to combat threats around the world. We fear the Commission is currently heading in the wrong direction, but look forward to the comprehensive report, in line with Congressional direction, on how we can best meet our nation's national security requirements.

Sincerely,

Kay Granger
Member of Congress

Steve Womack
Member of Congress