



STATE OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Governor

September 29, 2015

National Commission on the Future of the Army
2530 Crystal Drive
Taylor Building, Suite 5000
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your work relating to the future of the Army. The task before you to examine the size and force structure of the active and reserve components of the Army and make recommendations related to current and anticipated mission requirements is critical to the security of our great nation. In this regard, I would like to express my support for the members of the Washington Army National Guard (WAARNG) and the active duty Army troops that call Washington home.

I applaud the conversion of the 81st Armored Brigade to a Stryker Brigade. The decision makes good fiscal sense as it costs considerably less to operate and maintain a Stryker brigade over the current armored brigade. The conversion supports multi-component training with active duty units on Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) and brings a reserve component closer to the JBLM Stryker Center of Excellence for transformation and training. A wheeled vehicle fleet provides increased flexibility for domestic response.

Under the Army's Aviation Restructure Initiative, the National Guard Bureau selected the HQ, 66th Theater Aviation Command for inactivation effective August 2016. The 66th Theater Aviation Command provides command and control to large scale aviation responses; a critical task in domestic response situations. In 2015, Washington experienced the worst wildfires in state history with more than 750,000 acres consumed. Suppression of the fires required airspace coordination from an experienced aviation headquarters. As wildfires become worse and with the threat of additional natural disasters from the Cascadia subduction, retention of the 66th Theater Aviation Command and modernization of rotary wing aviation assets has become one of my primary concerns.

As the military shifts toward more engagement in the Pacific, there is a need to restore Asian Pacific cultural competencies. With no less than six centers focused on Asian culture in the immediate vicinity of JBLM, military units have a truly unique opportunity to hone skills providing a level of cultural insight that is hard to replicate anywhere else. Washington also hosts 39 consulates including 7 from Asia-Pacific countries. Part of the embassy outreach programs is



to educate and inform all of us on the culture and values of their society. Cultivating a better understanding now makes for more productive training events and military engagements at home and abroad.

The military has always responded to the international call for assistance when disaster strikes. Humanitarian assistance is a complex mission involving many state and non-state actors. More than 60 philanthropic organizations call Washington home. Many operate globally in support of disaster relief, global health crisis or humanitarian crisis. Washington provides the opportunity to build a depth of understanding between the armed forces and non-governmental organizations now; so that it is easier to conduct relief operations without barriers to communications so often encountered in times of crisis.

The state of Washington maintains a robust road, rail and port infrastructure that supports the deployment of JBLM units in their global mission. Modernization of transportation infrastructure to keep pace with growth and industry demand is a constant challenge. The Washington State legislature recently passed a \$16 billion comprehensive transportation package that represents the single largest investment in infrastructure in our state's history. The package provides \$450 million for improvements in the immediate vicinity of JBLM to alleviate congestion and increase highway safety. Other projects will improve our freight delivery, rail and seaport capacities, ensuring JBLM remains a power projection platform.

Eventually, every soldier leaves military service. When they do, we are committed to assisting in making that process as seamless as possible. With an innovative approach to transition, service members have unprecedented access to short term training, pre-apprenticeship programs and corporate fellowships. An industry sector hiring focus enables businesses to reach out to highly-qualified transitioning service members resulting in increased job placements upon transition and higher starting salaries.

Very truly yours,



Jay Inslee
Governor