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**TIMOTHY J. WALZ**  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
FIRST DISTRICT, MINNESOTA  
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October 8, 2015

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

Dear Chairman Ham,

I am writing to you to express my concerns regarding the future of our Army. Declining budgets and on-going reductions in force structure during a period of so much turmoil around the globe is cause for great concern. As a Member of Congress, it is a top priority of mine to ensure that the force structure of the Army corresponds with current and future threats to our national security.

It is imperative that a sufficient force structure comprised of all Army components be maintained. I have been a firm believer and supporter of the Total Force concept. The Army National Guard must be recognized as a true operational force. After fourteen years of continuous service in the Global War on Terrorism, the Army National Guard has become better equipped, better trained, better led, and more ready to defend the United States than any other time in its history. To squander these investments and achievements away as we decide on the future force structure of the Army is grossly irresponsible and unimaginable.

For instance, in my home state, Minnesota National Guardsmen have completed over 26,000 deployments to many countries around the globe, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia. These mobilizations for combat and combat support duties demonstrate the operational readiness the Army National Guard maintains to support national security needs. During this same time, the Minnesota Army National Guard has supported state and local authorities during domestic emergencies. These include responses to flooding, storms, and hurricanes helping to protect the health and safety of citizens of Minnesota.

Recent reductions in Army force structure and current efforts to further reduce active Army and Army National Guard end-strength are not in the best interests of the Army or our national security. Further reductions in end-strength and funding would reverse years of progress by returning the Army National Guard to a pre-9/11 level of readiness that often resulted in National Guard units not having the resources needed to perform and accomplish their mission. Furthermore, continued Army and Army National Guard end-strength reductions will create turmoil and stress across states and active duty installations.

The National Guard is a highly trained, combat experienced asset that I believe should continue to be properly resourced and equipped to meet the needs of both the federal government and states. The National Guard's cost-effectiveness should be leveraged to the fullest extent to meet fiscal and operational challenges the Army faces.

To that fact, I have considerable reservations with the Army's decision to transfer all Army National Guard AH-64 Apache attack helicopters to the active component as part of the Aviation Restructuring Initiative. I believe this decision contradicts the Army National Guard's purpose to serve as the combat reserve to the active component. By recommending the removal of AH-64 Apaches from the Army National Guard, the Army will lose an important asset as well as combat experienced pilots and maintenance crews. Simultaneously, the Army will lose the only path available to retain combat experienced aviators, maintainers, and leaders upon separation from active duty. I urge the Commission to consider these concerns as you develop your recommendations. I also urge the Commission to analyze options for fielding the National Guard with OH-58 Kiowas as a replacement to the AH-64 Apache.

As the Department of Defense has stated, it is DOD's goal to reduce stress on the force to the maximum extent possible and preserve readiness while reducing costs. However, I do not believe DOD and the Army can reduce stress on the force by continuing to reduce end-strengths at a time when the operation tempo fails to decrease in a time of continuing global instability. I am very concerned that Soldiers and families will experience higher rates of suicide, increased behavioral health cases, substance addiction, and increased divorce rates that we saw during the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns.

I acknowledge that Congress must act to end sequestration and provide adequate and consistent funding to enable predictable budgets for the Department of Defense and the Armed Forces. Moreover, I completely understand the difficult budget challenges that the Army faces. However, during this time of fiscal challenge, I compel Army and DOD leaders to consider the human dimension aspect when making the tough choices to determine Army force structure and national security capabilities. While important, I remind the Commissioners and leaders in DOD that no one nation has ever achieved victory in conflict solely on the use of equipment!

As part of the Commission's mandate, your comprehensive and long-term recommendations for our Army of the future should provide an assessment of the size and force mixture of all Army components using a Total Force concept in light of the current and projected security environment.

In conclusion, I am absolutely dedicated to ensuring that all components of the Army have the resources necessary to train, and perform as the most capable Army in the world to defend our nation and ensure our national security. I truly appreciate the work and efforts of the Commission and look forward to developing a cost-effective Army that best serves the national security interest of our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tim Walz", written in a cursive style.

Tim Walz  
Member of Congress