

ASSISTANT REPUBLICAN WHIP

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-2404

8 October 2015

General Carter F. Ham, USA (Ret.)  
National Commission of the Future of the Army  
2530 Crystal Drive, Suite #5000  
Arlington, VA 22202

Statement for Record

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for taking the time to seek my input. The future of the United States Army is an issue that we all care deeply about and wish to help shape. The United States requires a military that is ready to fight and to win in the most difficult and uncertain circumstances. The Nation demands a force that can respond to situations ranging from natural disasters, to contingency operations, to declared wars at a moment's notice. To fulfill this mandate, the Army needs to modernize, innovate, and become more responsive to emerging conflicts.

The National Guard is a key asset in the modernization process and has been used to respond with the flexibility required to manage developing warfare. Over the past 14 years of combat, Congress and the Department of Defense have invested billions of dollars to improve the Guard's equipment and train its soldiers. As a result, the National Guard has become an operational force that is more capable and better trained than at any other point in its nearly 380 year history. I can personally attest to this as the only currently enlisted Service Member in Congress and a proud member of the Mississippi Army National Guard. The Guard has been and will continue to be a force multiplier for the Joint Services during the Global War on Terror and a crucial component of our national defense plan, no longer just a strategic reserve.

The nature of the National Guard has also ensured rapid responses during natural disasters, like Hurricane Katrina or the recent flooding in South Carolina, as well as terrorist attacks like the Boston Marathon Bombing in 2013. This partnership with the local community has saved countless American lives here at home. The Guard has also been activated to provide expertise and personnel to the Border Patrol, Department of Homeland Security, and counter-narcotic operations. This has been essential in the success of domestic law enforcement. We need to recognize the value and safety these National Guard units bring to our communities.

Due to restricted budgets and threats of sequestration, the Active Army component has recently tried to remove some of the National Guard's assets. The most notorious attempt has been the Army Aviation Restructuring Initiative, which would result in the National Guard losing all attack reconnaissance helicopter assets. This plan is a mistake that will cause irreparable harm to our national security.

#### Army Aviation Restructuring Initiative – Equipment:

The Army Aviation Restructuring Initiative (ARI) does not address the foundational mission requirements of military aviation. Even if all the National Guard's Apaches are transferred to the Active Army, units will still be short helicopters. Active units will continue to leave non-deployed units short Apaches to cover these gaps. Shell games played with equipment will not solve the problems we face. Instead, it will hide the issue while the base problem of equipment shortages grows larger.

The National Guard already provides several options for ready-to-deploy Attack Reconnaissance Battalions (Apache units). Active components cannot meet the demands of the combatant commanders. These Guard units have and continue to relieve stress on the Active Component by providing and deploying units with high readiness. However, the ARI plan restricts resourcing to six out of the eight National Guard Apache units, which means options to utilize these units would be reduced due to readiness shortfalls. The Nation will be losing valuable assets and this will place increased stress on the already overtasked Active Army aviation units. The Army National Guard aviation units cannot be preparing for deployment and preparing to stand down at the same time. A choice needs to be made.

The Army National Guard maintains a crucial capacity for the Nation by providing a place for combat experienced pilots and mechanics to continue to serve and maintain certifications once leaving Active Duty. This capability allows the Total Army to recall and immediately utilize a large number of air crews in the event of emergency. Removing these positions from the Guard will waste years of experience gained in combat and training. The personnel to fly and maintain the equipment do not transfer with the helicopters. They will need to be retrained on new platforms, and the Nation will lose years of valuable experience.

#### Army Aviation Restructuring Initiative – Saving Claims:

The Army Aviation Restructuring Initiative's claims of \$12 billion in savings are misleading. The Government Accountability Office questions the ARI's claims based on their review of costs and operational impact. It does not account for manning, equipment, and operational uncertainties. It also does not include increased cost to retrain National Guard soldiers (maintainers, support soldiers, and pilots) and convert equipment (upgrading aged helicopters to match ones used on Active Duty or replace equipment to work with new helicopter platforms.) Also, \$10.5 of the \$12 billion is found through cost avoidance, not actual savings. The majority of this cost avoidance is from the divestiture of Army's Kiowa and training helicopter fleets, not from the Active Army receiving the Guard's Apaches.

The ARI plan is not the only one that has been proposed. The National Guard Bureau (NGB) unveiled a competing plan that actually provides 20% more capability to the Total Army at only a two to three percent increase in cost. I ask you to study and recommend this proposal.

#### Conclusion:

The Army Aviation Restructuring Initiative is not a sustainable decision. Long term, it will lower the country's ability to defend itself by removing the flexibility a trained and equipped National Guard provides to the Joint Forces. The initiative does not address the lack of helicopters in the Active Component due to funding gaps. This plan also squanders talent gained through years of training and combat, which are not easily replaced or reproduced.

The ARI, once carried out, cannot be easily undone. Once the Guard loses the equipment, it also loses the people, our most valuable resource. The equipment can be replaced with money. The people were trained and became proficient over many years. If an unexpected event or

emergency situation occurs, time is the most valuable asset, and a luxury we would not have. It would take a decade or more to get the units back up to current levels of readiness. There are better options than the ARI, including the one proposed by NGB. We must adopt a plan that ensures an equipped, trained, and operational National Guard.

This plan does not achieve what it set out to accomplish. Rather, it puts national security at risk by providing fewer trained personnel and less warfighting capabilities. Simply put, this plan is an attempt by the Active Army to acquire helicopters quickly and easily by bypassing Congress and the normal authorization and appropriations process – ultimately at the expense of the Guard. This cannot happen.

Congress has made clear through my amendment to the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act that we will hold off implementing any changes until we receive the National Commission of the Future of the Army's report. I look forward to its release. Thank you for your hard work in shaping the Army's future.

Sincerely,



STEVEN M. PALAZZO  
Member of Congress