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What Price for Service?

By the Numbers, the Price of Service by the Guard and Reserve:

- Total number of National Guard members and Reserve Component reservists on active duty, as of 2 March 2005: **183,366**

- Total number of National Guard members and Reserve Component reservists activated at some point since the 11 Sept. attacks: **430,000**

- Percentage of American troops in Iraq who are National Guard or Reserve forces: **40 percent**

- Percentage of married Guard members and Reserve Component reservists who report a loss of income over civilian jobs, as of May 2004: **55 percent**

- Percentage of married Guard members and Reserve Component reservists who report a decrease in pay of \$30,000 a year or more, as of May 2004: **15 percent**

- Percentage of National Guard members and Reserve Component reservists who cite loss of income as a reason to leave the military, as of May 2004: **51 percent**

- Percentage of National Guard members and Reserve Component reservists who cite family burdens as a reason to leave the military, as of May 2004: **71 percent**

The new environment we find ourselves in today, although not prepared for, is here. What we do now is critical. Do we sink all our energies into holding the line on people and personnel cost while investing in the next technologies that will keep us ahead of the next phase of asymmetric warfare? Or, do we go to the American people and say that we spent all the necessary and unpredictable resources for the Cold War, and past wars, to win them and that this one is different? We have to increase spending for the people and the technologies to win and prepare for the future phases of asymmetric warfare.

I suggest we have to increase spending to above the levels normally spent on defense to secure our economy and way of

life. If we do not, then people are going to leave at even more alarming rates than they are today. Today we are having enormous problems in recruiting and retention. The one true advantage that America does have over any adversary is the people. It seems to me that it is time to get off the dime and spend a dime. Spending on high tech has not won the current war nor any past war. It is the ingenious adaptability of the American military people and their families that has allowed the services to fight and win.

We also have to size the AC and RC equal to the new missions and duties they face. They both have to be large enough to meet current and *anticipated* needs and threats. The anticipated piece is the part that we seldom get right. Trying to find the requisite skills to wage wars, fight terrorism, win a peace, conduct stabilization, and conduct nation-building operations is very difficult. There is no adjustable formula to get this all correctly done. It does cost the American tax payer to have freedom and our way of life.

The Reserve Component is a vital part of the equation to be successful in any military mission. The Reserve Component is a great value for the American taxpayer. This Congress needs our help in making sure we properly address the personnel issues as well as the technology issues needed to maintain our fighting capabilities. It is my belief that the Navy is making a mistake by cutting personnel for the sake of high tech, but it is done. Those who remain – although not at the proper levels for the Navy Reserve – deserve to be treated with care and respect. The only way to do that is to emphasize the spending levels needed for changes in the personnel benefits. Consider letting Congress know your stand on this; it will make a difference. If you do not, then the cuts and overuse will continue. Write your Congressman: <www.house.gov/writerep>. To write your Senator: <www.senate.gov>. ✉

Many National Security experts have been warning of impending short falls in the right number of service members to man the military, including the Navy's Naval Reserve Force. They also warned, and I totally agree, that the ability to win this Global War on Terrorism, and the "other contingencies," depends more on the people than it does on technology. Our historical American way of war has proven that people are our best weapon system.

What can be done about it depends on several cultural changes that we all need to address. Are we willing to make the people and their families a priority? Are we willing to address the fact that instead of complaining about not enough money, we address the need for more money to spend towards making sure our service members and their families do have all the assets needed? Are we willing to recognize that the Guard and Reserve components are fighting and dying in this war, just as they have in any other war, but are doing so at increased rates? Are we willing to say – stop the madness of a drawdown during a wartime, stop the madness of ignoring that people are overextended and are overused at this time?

Not many in leadership were willing to admit that five years ago, that we would be using the Guard and Reserve members at the rates we are using them today. However, since 1991, all the indications were that we would be using our Guard and Reserve forces at increased rates. Categorically, it appears that leadership missed the predictions, or did not pay attention to the indicators. For the record: