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Time for Detailed Review

There are several extraordinary issues that can be taken away from recent Congressional hearings specifically directed toward Guard and Reserve issues. We thank Congress for holding these hearings and inserting Guard and Reserve current issues in the minds of Congressional members and the departments.

It was extremely clear during these hearings that those providing the testimony from within the structure of DoD and for the Department of the Navy appeared to be out of touch. These are observer's words. The testimony provided by the departments was eloquently provided as "plans" to transform the Guard and Reserve in order to relieve the stress or to address the issues. DoD and OPNAV testimony appeared to be staged until certain Congressional members pressed questions about what service members in the Guard and Reserve really saw as important issues. Most importantly, certain Congressional members were exposing what they are hearing from members in Iraq and in the field. What is said by service members was different than the testimony being provided.

With the pending force structure institutional changes and cultural changes that are in play for our Naval Reserve and the Naval Reserve' Navy, I believe it is time to take a detailed look at where we are going. These recent strategic and tactical efforts appear to be in areas that have no real strategic mission requirement basis. The stated changes, as is always the case, are more in the area of what the programmers desire. Is this the way to run a railroad: We can't afford the tracks, but let's build the new train anyway?

The United States military is undoubtedly at new heights of military respect and national pride. We all should feel pride and professionalism in arriving at this time in our history. The involvement of the Reserve Components service members has never been more required by our National Military Strategy, than it is today. Involvement by our Guard and Reserve forces

is somewhat different today than it has been in the past. Never in past mobilizations has our Reserve Component been used in the rotation of forces for nation building or post conflict resolution, nor has it been used for war fighting or homeland security in these ways.

It is very clear that the Naval Reserve needs to change, but so do all the services and components. I believe the Naval Reserve has changed and if willing to change (transform). Our Reserve Component has always been made up of those citizen sailors who are more Sailors than they are citizen. But, most of all, they are dedicated citizens who are part of the business world and already understand the best business practices that are currently being utilized in our society. We have recalled 360,000 of these citizens at latest count, and there is no end in sight for utilization of our most dedicated citizens. As we change the construct of their organization, are we listening to them, or are we changing for "transformation-programming's" sake?

One of the most interesting points that appeared to be missed by our leaders during recent hearings is that members of the Reserve Components know there has been a change in the utilization. Why do they know? They are living it. Their families are living it. Their employers are living it. Most importantly, they know they have trained and have always wanted to serve – or they wouldn't have been volunteers – just like their active member counterparts. So, it is very hard to understand why leaders do not see that there needs to be something different in our National Military strategy, and National Security Strategy that transcends just programming for high-tech improvements. People understand the issue much faster than given credit.

Instead of DoD and OPNAV pressing Congress for improvements in the Selective Reserve MGIB, or finding a way to improve health care for our Reserve members, the departments have decided it is more important to find a way to reduce end strength during increased utilization. I am no rocket scientist, but this certainly does not make sense to most people. Currently, the Navy is conducting a zero-based review (conducted by the same offices that did the last bottom-up review, the QDR, and recent Reserve force studies) which is supposed to restructure and realign the Naval

Reserve into what our country needs to what threat? Instead of providing more quality in training, the Navy has implemented a new "cost-saving" Fleet Response Program. To date, no one has identified the resources that will be available to provide minimum, much less existing, training for our Reserve forces that will be "aligned" by decommissioning and integration.

All Reserve forces – especially the Naval Reserve – should be and must be integrated and aligned, but not at the expense of providing effective, efficient, cost-savings forces – those of the Reserve Components. If our Reserve forces have not been the cost-savings, efficient, surging force, why are we using them? If they are not already aligned and integrated, why do they make up a large percent of those forces returning to Iraq? The answers to these questions have already been answered. They have been answered by those members of the Guard and Reserve forces who are in Iraq, on the way to Iraq, have gone to the multiple war on terrorist actions, or are on recall to go to the next conflict. So, why do we need these people to leave their civilian employment, and "cushy" positions, to go complete our national security strategy?

The main reason we need them is because they are effective, they are efficient, they are cost-effective, and they are surging! Does the department see this and understand that more could be used in the Navy?

There are always better ways to do things, and we as a country usually find those ways. We have and find the technologies to make things happen. We are training great people to do little jobs, and training great people to do the hard jobs, and to do them right. Our strength is and always will be in the people, and the leadership that goes with them. What is hard to explain today is why departmental leaders cannot see that the Reserve Component is a cost-effective force.

It is time for our departmental leaders to address retention and recruiting issues, health care, and improved MGIB. It is also time for our leaders to understand that the members of the Reserve forces are trained as a unit, with a unit, and for a unit that is dedicated to the U.S. military ideals.

So, instead of changing totally how a Reserve service member is aligned for doing his/her

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services, perhaps it is better to look at the pyramid upside down. What does it take to make sure we have a reserve total force that really is aligned with the active force to the most efficient, best business practice? I suggest it might be: what does it cost and how well do they fight in battle or provide service to those who are fighting.

These Congressional hearings asked the question – what can we do to relieve the stress on our Reserve and Guard forces? The answers provided were never to provide a continuum of benefits for the members and their families. Instead, the answers provided were that we are transforming the Guard and Reserve forces because we must transform the Guard and Reserve forces. The answers provided were not those that the E-5 or O-4 or their families might provide. The answers were more those of a plan. It may be time for the actionable answers, like: raise the Selected Reserve MGIB, or improve the health care for service members, or (something really transformational) improve the benefits for the employers of Guard and Reserve forces!

How do we really get to these new changes that we all want too much? Can DoD or Department of the Navy make the changes along with all the DoD Research Centers? If they could, why haven't they figured it out by now? The departments and research centers of excellence have certainly had time and money on their sides to figure out the changes.

I strongly suggest that Congress must act and Congress must act soon, on what our reserve structure should be for the next 20 years. We still do not understand the real or emerging threats to our National Security or Homeland Security. A Congressionally mandated commission can and would address key issues important to members and their families, even if others are overlooking them. If we fail to address the needs and requirements correctly, then we will certainly lose structure, people, equipment, and surge capabilities for a long time. Some would say we need to lose it. However, more importantly, why would we need to lose it, if they are surging now to provide for our national security? We have to review these changes from outside the department, to get the transformation correct. ⚡