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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–0403

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

April 27, 2015

The Honorable Ashton Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter,

We write today to express our strong concern with the Aviation Restructure Initiative (ARI) as proposed by the Army in the President's fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget submission and its effects on national security. We believe this initiative will, over time, return the National Guard to a strategic reserve and reduce the operational capacity and capability of the Total Army. The National Guard is now an indispensable and proven operational force that has been battle tested and validated over 13 years of conflict. Allowing full implementation of ARI would squander the nation's investment and would ignore the capability and capacity of the National Guard.

ARI has been presented as a budget-driven restructuring which allows the Army to quickly react to world instability. Specifically, the Army has asserted that ARI would save $12 billion. However, upon closer examination, the accounting reveals that approximately $1.5 billion in savings would be realized before FY 2020 with the remaining $10.5 billion characterized as "cost avoidance" which will occur after 2020 and until some undefined point in the future. Additionally, none of the increased cost to implement ARI, such as retraining and conversion costs, are included in the Army's savings and cost avoidance calculations. These costs could easily obfuscate savings within the Future Years Defense Plan. Finally, according to ARI calculations provided by the Army, none of the $12 billion in cost savings is from moving Apaches from the National Guard to the Army.

Due to a lack of sufficient and compelling budget justification, we are concerned the Army's decision to remove the Army National Guard from combat attack aviation is based on the Army's incorrect perception that Army National Guard attack aviation capability lacks in its ability to adapt to new tactics and procedures. The National Guard can continue to perform any Apache mission in a professional, fully competent and cost-effective way as was proven in all recent conflicts. However, we are open to a transparent and thorough third-party accounting of the true costs and implications of ARI which will result in the work that will be done by the Commission on the Future of the Army.

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While the FY15 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) limits the transfer of Apache helicopters from the National Guard to the Active Army through April 2016, we are aware that the Commission will not provide its recommendations until February 2016. This gives Congress only two months to consider the Commission's recommendations before the Army will begin the transfer of the remaining Apaches out of the Army National Guard. It is our opinion that once Apaches are transferred out of the Army National Guard, it would be fiscally and operationally impractical for that transfer to be reversed. Therefore, we write to express our serious concern regarding the Apache transfer and insist on a delay in transferring Apaches out of the National Guard until Congress has had sufficient time to consider the recommendations of the Commission and, if necessary, act on those recommendations.

Sincerely,

Steve Womack
Member of Congress

Kay Granger
Member of Congress

Ralph Lee Abraham
Member of Congress

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