



# Chairman Hal Rogers

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## House Committee on Appropriations

**FY 2016 Budget Request – United States Army**

**March 26, 2015**

**Opening Statement As Prepared**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding. Secretary McHugh and General Odierno, thank you for your many years of service, and for taking the time to be here. I welcome you back to the Defense subcommittee.

The men and women you lead in the US Army are dedicated, they are talented, and they are tireless. They continue to answer the call, time and time again, to serve the needs of our country abroad and to demonstrate true leadership at home. As the world becomes more complex, and more dangerous, the demands on our troops are increasing. This Committee recognizes their sacrifice, and the sacrifice of their families, and we stand ready to support them in every way. I thank them for their service, and you for your leadership in challenging times.

A lot has changed since the last time you came before this subcommittee. Russian aggression is fueling conflict and staggering loss of life in Ukraine, putting the current death toll at well over 6,000. The Islamic State continues to further destabilize and torment Iraq and Syria – and is now establishing a presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, we have seen a decline in security due to a resurgence of the Taliban – requiring us to maintain a presence of 10,000 troops in that country this year, as the President announced earlier this week. And we still have US troops deployed in the fight against Ebola, a disease that has claimed over 10,000 in a matter of months.

While it seems as though increased force structure is warranted in the face of such unpredictable challenges confronting our troops, instead we are doing quite the opposite. As you stated in your testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee earlier this year, active end-strength has been cut by 80,000, and the National Guard and Reserve has been reduced by 18,000 just in the last three years. Thirteen brigade combat teams (BCTs) have been deactivated and the rest are undergoing massive reorganizations. Three active combat aviation brigades (CABs) are currently being eliminated, including one in my home State of Kentucky at Fort Campbell. Just after the 159<sup>th</sup> combat aviation brigade returned from a 9-month deployment in Afghanistan, the Army announced it would be disbanded and its soldiers sent elsewhere. The elimination of this critical, and top-notch I may add, CAB will result in a loss of some 3,000 personnel at Fort Campbell. Once the 159<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade has been eliminated at the end of this current fiscal year, the Army will be left with just 10 CABs in the active force.

With the Army scheduled to continue on with this trend until it reaches 490,000 troops at the end of this year, we must have a thoughtful conversation about how we will respond to increasing threats, on multiple continents, against very different enemies - simultaneously. The demands on our Army are great, and your budget request certainly reflects this reality. I look forward to a ~~thoughtful~~ discussion today about a realistic approach to addressing threats to American security around the world.

This Committee remains confident with the leadership of the Army in your capable hands. You have our support and our gratitude, and we thank you for the many years of service you have offered our nation. I look forward to hearing your testimony, and I yield back.

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