

Congressman Marsha Blackburn
House Armed Services Committee:
Member Day
Opening Statement
May 8, 2013

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify this afternoon.

As you may know I represent the Seventh Congressional District of Tennessee which is home to the brave men and women of Ft. Campbell.

Ft. Campbell is home to the storied 101st Airborne, the 5th Special Forces Group and the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment which piloted Navy SEAL Team Six during the raid on Osama Bin Laden.

Each soldier who calls Ft. Campbell home has gone through some of the most intensive training on the planet which pushed their minds and bodies to their physical limits. In the end, those who made the cut

have truly earned the right to be part of our United States military and serve on the frontlines in the fight against global terrorism.

However due to the extreme cuts to our military under Sequestration some of the military readiness programs that they depend upon are in jeopardy of facing cuts.

One program that I am especially concerned about is the Flying Hour Program. This vital program provides aviation training resources for individual crewmembers and units according to approved aviation training strategies. In addition, it also provides individual and collective proficiency in support of ongoing combat and non-combat air operations.

For aviation units like the 101st Airborne, this training is not only vital to mission success but to the safety of our soldiers.

As a result of sequestration, the Army has already begun curtailing training, cancelling training center rotations, ending collective training above the

platoon level except for the next-to-deploy units, reducing flying hours, leaving many units unprepared for possible contingencies both at home and abroad.

Many military specialties, such as pilots, are acutely affected, with many set to lose their currency in a matter of months.

The Army could have to cut 37,000 flying hours from aviation training creating a shortfall of over 500 aviators just this year.

I urge the House Armed Services Committee to pay close attention to restoring the Flying Hour Programs to their full capacity in FY 14.

Without it, vital national security assets like the 101st Airborne will find their important mission at risk. More importantly, the lives of the soldiers we count on to deploy in our defense will be put at much greater risk.

I thank the committee again for allowing me to testify this morning and hope that we can work

together to protect this vital program to the Ft.
Campbell community.