

Member Testimony Submission  
Representative Scott Perry (PA-4)  
House Armed Services Committee  
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015  
Wednesday, April 9, 2014

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this hearing today and for receiving testimony on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2015. This critical legislation will chart the path for our military in terms of policy and funding. To be sure, in setting this course, Congress will need to make difficult decisions on a variety of issues to reflect the reality of shrinking budgets and the possibility of sustained sequester funding levels in out-years. Today, I'll focus my remarks on one particular decision that has raised significant concern with many of our fellow Members of the House: the Army's proposed "aviation restructure initiative" and its negative impacts on our National Guard.

As reflected in its FY15 budget request, the Army has begun a comprehensive restructuring of its aviation assets to "optimize their efficiency and utility at home and abroad." Under the terms of this restructuring, the Army will divest all single-engine rotary wing aircraft (for example, OH-58D/Kiowa Warriors) from its inventory, transfer all National Guard AH-64/Apaches to the active component, and replace them with 111 UH-60/Blackhawks. The Army alleges that this restructuring is necessary to generate savings and make more affordable the remaining aviation fleet. But the question remains, Mr. Chairman, savings at what cost?

Since 9/11, the National Guard repeatedly has risen to the occasion. They've answered the call and fought bravely in both Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as myriad missions around the world.. At the height of these wars, nearly fifty percent of the Army's total force was a mix of reserve component personnel. The Pennsylvania Army National Guard alone contributed more than 21,000 overseas deployments. To meet these needs, the National Guard has transitioned from a strategic reserve to a fully operational force. They've partnered with and fought side-by-side their active component personnel, all while continuing to execute their missions domestically. As the National Governors Association recently put it best, the modern National Guard has become "a highly experienced and capable combat force and an essential State partner in responding to domestic disasters and emergencies."

Unfortunately, the Army's proposed aviation restructure initiative will have devastating impacts on all that the National Guard has achieved during these years of war. It will leave the National Guard deeply hollowed and much less capable. Notably, by stripping the National Guard of all of its Apache aircraft, the Army is ensuring that the National Guard will be less combat-ready and, most importantly, less able to provide operational depth. This consequence represents a fundamental shift in the nature and role of the National Guard and runs counter to the wisdom and preference of many members of Congress and their constituents.

H.R. 3930, the National Commission on the Structure of the Army Act of 2014, which was introduced this past January by Congressman Joe Wilson [SC-2], provides an excellent

framework for the Committee to work from in crafting this language. Notably, the bill freezes the transfer and divestiture of Army aircraft and maintains the National Guard end strength at 350,000 while a commission undertakes a “comprehensive study of the structure of the Army to determine the proper force mixture of the active component and reserve component, and how the structure should be modified to best fulfill current and anticipated mission requirements for the Army in a manner consistent with available resources and estimated future resources.” Among other things, the commission is tasked with “giving particular consideration to meeting the current and anticipated requirements of the combatant commands, achieving cost-efficiencies between the regular and reserve components, and determining a structure that maximizes and appropriately balances affordability, efficiency, effectiveness, capability, and readiness.” The members of the commission would be appointed by the President and the Chairman and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, and they would submit their findings, conclusions, and recommendations not later than February 1, 2016.

More than 150 of our colleagues already have declared their support for this considerate and deliberate approach. The independent commission model that it proposes has been endorsed by all fifty state governors. Without a doubt, this significant show of support makes it clear that the decision about whether and how the Army force should be restructured requires due deliberation and cannot be rushed. By including H.R. 3930 in this year’s NDAA, the Committee can ensure that result, and for that reason, I respectfully request such language is included in the final bill.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee about this important issue.