

Rep Blackburn Testimony

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

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. Nearly 1,900 Officers and 26,500 enlisted personnel call Ft. Campbell home.

Like many installations across the country, Ft. Campbell is facing reductions that will have an impact on military readiness programs.

I was pleased to work with this committee last year in support of the Army Flying Hours 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.

Due to Army budget constraints, Army aviators will only be provided with 9.3 hours of training- per crew- per month. This is below the requested increase to 11.3 hours of training per crew-per month.

Currently, Active Army Combat Aviation Brigades have a \$55 million shortfall in meeting 100% of their critical requirements. Without the necessary funding, home station training opportunities will not be available to achieve optimal combat readiness.

I ask the members of this committee to once again pay close attention to restoring the Army Flying Hours Program to its full capacity in FY 16.

I would also like to bring to this committee's attention that further reducing our nation's Armed Forces will hamstring our ability to meet the challenges and threats of an increasingly destabilized world.

As America withdraws from the international community, countries like Russia are becoming increasingly brazen.

We see it in the annexation of Crimea by Russian-backed separatists, civil war in Yemen and Syria, and China's military buildup.

As discord continues to grow around the world, the United States must have the personnel and capabilities to respond and protect our national interests.

If Ft. Campbell is required to reduce its active-duty personnel from 26,500 to 16,000, I worry about our ability to defend ourselves from threats and project power internationally.

Ft. Campbell is already one of the most heavily deployed bases in the country. If it suffers a troop reduction, it will be felt.

When Ebola was spreading through West African countries, it was 700 soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division at Ft. Campbell that were deployed to build medical facilities and contain the outbreak.

In the spring, 700 more soldiers from the 101st will be deployed to Afghanistan.

Soldiers from Ft. Campbell are always tasked with response to threats made against our security around the globe.

Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning. I stand ready to work with this committee on strengthening programs and reviewing processes that are vital to our national defense.