

Blackburn – HASC Member Day

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. Approximately 1,900 Officers and 26,000 enlisted personnel call Ft. Campbell home.

Like many installations across the country, Ft. Campbell was facing troop cuts. I was pleased to see that Ft. Campbell was spared major troop reductions.

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.

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 17.

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.

Soldiers from Ft. Campbell are always tasked with responding to threats to our security around the globe. We would be putting their lives in increased danger by reducing their numerical strength and not providing them with the training they need.

That is why I support H.R. 4534, the *Protecting Our Security through Utilizing Right-Sized End Strength Act*. H.R. 4534 would reverse the current drawdown of the end strength levels for the United States Land Forces, specifically the Army and Marines.

H.R. 4534 will freeze the current drawdown on Marine personnel levels and increase Army end strength levels.

General Carter Ham recently testified that it takes 3 years to stand back up a fully ready Brigade Combat Team. H.R. 4534 will make sure that the military personnel we need to address an increasingly destabilized world will not be mothballed in the pursuit of short-term budget savings.

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.