

Chairman Wilson Opening Statement
The Impact of the Current Budget-Constrained Environment on Military End Strength

The hearing will come to order. The Subcommittee today will focus on the harsh realities of maintaining an all volunteer force in a budget constrained environment—reducing end strength of the military services.

Although I understand the fiscal realities, as I have made clear in the past, I have serious reservations about the end strength and force structure reduction plans for our military. America remains at war today and will continue at some level of persistent conflict globally with a ruthless and committed enemy for the foreseeable future encouraged by outlaw rogue regimes, we must not forget the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Nevertheless, the task of reducing manpower is not easily accomplished and must be done with great care and compassion to ensure the services keep faith with servicemembers and their families who have served our Nation through more than ten years of war. The committee will hear from the witnesses on which authorities the department and each of the services plan to use to reduce end strength over the next several years. We will also explore the impact of a year-long Continuing Resolution and sequestration on the services current end strength plans. As a reminder, military personnel accounts are exempt in fiscal year 2013 from cuts under sequestration; but that does not guarantee there will not be a long term impact on end strength levels.

Of significant concern to me is that increasing fiscal pressure on the military services, especially the Army and Marine Corps, will compel them to move from gradual reductions in manning levels to precipitous declines. I am also concerned that if the military services are compelled to make more significant reductions than now planned, that the use of involuntary separation authorities will become the norm.

I would like to welcome our distinguished witnesses:

The Honorable Jessica L. Wright

Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Lieutenant General Howard B. Bromberg

Deputy Chief of Staff G-1

U. S. Department of the Army

Vice Admiral Scott R. Van Buskirk

Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Manpower, Personnel, Training, and Education

U. S. Department of the Navy

Lieutenant General Robert E. Milstead, Jr

Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs

United States Marine Corps

Lieutenant General Darrell D. Jones

Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services
U. S. Department of the Air Force

I would also like to recognize that today is the first appearance before the Subcommittee for Lieutenant General Bromberg and Secretary Wright. Welcome to both of you.

Mrs. Davis, did you have any opening remarks?

Secretary Wright we will begin with your testimony. As a reminder please keep your statements to 3 minutes. We have your written statements for the record.