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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

January 13, 2017

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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

Mr. Donald J. Trump
President-elect of the United States
c/o Trump Organization
725 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear President-elect Trump:

As you are aware, United States military personnel currently serve in a broad range of functions in the Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). The Executive Branch establishes a force management level (FML), or "troop cap," to limit the number of servicemembers deployed in certain AORs. President Obama's Administration most recently set the troop cap in Afghanistan to 8,448 for the beginning of 2017, and 5,262 troops in Iraq - numbers which, as you'll see from below, are too low given the military force necessary to achieve our Nation's strategic aims.

Last month, I led a hearing in my role as Chairwoman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations to hear testimony on the readiness and strategic considerations of force management levels in Iraq and Afghanistan. Retired senior Army officers and outside experts confirmed concerns I held in regards to second order effects of the way in which the current Administration has imposed these troop caps.

To meet troop cap levels that the Administration imposed, the Department of the Army implemented costly, counterintuitive "solutions" that deleteriously affect our military's readiness. Combat Aviation Brigades deploy without their aircraft maintainers to remain below FML, and instead contract for this service overseas. *Our military pays twice for a capability already organic to the Armed Forces.*

This practice causes a number of other problems as well. For over \$100 million dollars a year, the Army sends contractors to the CENTCOM AOR while their active-duty counterparts stay home and let their skills atrophy. Units are broken apart, adversely impacting their cohesion and morale. Contractors in turn can only fulfill a specific task delineated by arduously negotiated

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contracts, limiting the flexibility and responsiveness that could have benefitted deployed Commanders. United States military readiness downgrades from already dangerously low levels.

I urge your incoming Administration, in conjunction with military leadership, to mindfully make force management level decisions with a clear understanding of resources needed to achieve the desired end result. Deliberate civil-military discussions about that desired end result at the beginning of setting force management levels should then inform the subsequent FML imposed on our military, not the other way around.

Setting arbitrary troop caps not only hinders the military planning process, it has severe consequences that could easily be ameliorated. As your incoming Administration considers opportunities to more efficiently spend taxpayer dollars, I strongly encourage you to reverse the policy of setting troop caps first and forcing the military to plan and operate within that construct.

I stand ready to work with you on these issues as an active member of Congress and leader on the House Armed Services Committee.

Sincerely,



Vicky Hartzler
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations